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No. 156

N° 156

ISSN 1180-2987

**Legislative Assembly  
of Ontario**

First Session, 36th Parliament

**Assemblée législative  
de l'Ontario**Première session, 36<sup>e</sup> législature**Official Report  
of Debates  
(Hansard)****Journal  
des débats  
(Hansard)****Tuesday 4 February 1997****Mardi 4 février 1997****Speaker**  
Honourable Chris Stockwell**Président**  
L'honorable Chris Stockwell**Clerk**  
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Claude L. DesRosiers



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3330 Whitney Block, 99 Wellesley St W  
Toronto ON M7A 1A2  
Telephone 416-325-7400; fax 416-325-7430  
Published by the Legislative Assembly of Ontario



Service du Journal des débats  
3330 Édifice Whitney ; 99, rue Wellesley ouest  
Toronto ON M7A 1A2  
Téléphone, 416-325-7400 ; télécopieur, 416-325-7430  
Publié par l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario



# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 4 February 1997

# ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 4 février 1997

*The House met at 1332.  
Prayers.*

## MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

### ERNEST DEBASSIGE

**Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin):** Residents of West Bay First Nation on Manitoulin Island are mourning the death of Ernest Louis Debassige, who passed away two days before Christmas. I know the House will want to share with me in extending heartfelt sympathy to Ernie's family. Yet people in West Bay, indeed people throughout Manitoulin Island, Ontario and the nation, not only mourn his passing, they celebrate his life as one dedicated to the welfare of people and particularly native people.

Born at West Bay, son of the late David and Cecile Debassige, Ernest served in the Second World War with the Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry Highlanders. Following the war, he was instrumental in gaining national recognition and a better life for Canada's native war veterans, sparking the foundation of the National Native Veterans' Association. He was a proud member of Branch 177 of the Royal Canadian Legion and a member of the Manitoulin Cenotaph Committee.

Ernie was active in the Union of Ontario Indians and his political involvements were known and respected nationally as a reflection of his unwavering loyalty to the goals and aspirations of his people. In 1993, the Canada 125 commemorative medal was presented to Ernie in recognition of his many contributions to veterans, youth and first nations causes.

I was proud and enriched to have known Ernie Debassige. In the words of Joseph Hare, grand council chief of the Anishnabek Nation, Ernest Louis Debassige was "a warrior to the end."

## SERVICES FOR THE DISABLED

**Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre):** In the last few days the social development committee has been hearing from various members of the community about their concerns around what is happening to the disabled in this province. It was a very interesting experience for us to hear about the cumulative problems faced by the disabled as a result of the actions of the Progressive Conservative government. Indeed, it's very interesting particularly to hear of their analysis around what the implications of megaweek might be.

I only have time to talk about some of the questions raised by disabled groups around the dumping of 50% of

social assistance on to the municipalities, but those questions are, for example: How does that dump fit with the redefinition of "disability?" How will that affect the numbers who are eligible to be considered for what the government has called its guaranteed income system? Who is going to be responsible for the Ontario drug plan? Who is going to manage to set the standards for who is eligible for that? What will happen in terms of special needs across the board in terms of assistive devices? What will happen in terms of appeals around assistance to the Social Assistance Review Board?

These are questions which the government has not answered and they are questions which are urgent to the disabled population of this province.

## SPORTS IN SIMCOE CENTRE

**Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Simcoe Centre):** It is with pleasure that I rise today to speak of some recent sporting achievements in my riding. On Tuesday, January 28, television viewers across Canada got a glimpse of Ontario Hockey League action at its best with the first annual OHL Bell All-Star Cup broadcast from Barrie. The Barrie Examiner reported, "The feeling in the air was electric" as a packed house of more than 4,000 cheered at the Barrie Molson Centre.

Simcoe Centre's home team, the Barrie Colts, normally plays for the central division, but moved to the east for the match. Players from the Colts gave it their all, but lost to the west in a close 5-4 game.

More than 40 of the best junior players in the country took part in the OHL Bell All-Star Cup, and many have already found homes in the National Hockey League.

I would like to congratulate all the players, coaches and organizers for making this event such a success.

While we're on the subject of excellence in sports, I would like to extend my best wishes to all of the athletes, especially those from Simcoe Centre, who are participating in the 1997 Special Olympics World Winter Games in Collingwood and Toronto. I look forward to cheering them on.

## PIKANGIKUM YOUTH PATROL

**Mr Frank Micalash (Kenora):** I'm delighted today to stand in my place and congratulate the Pikangikum Youth Patrol in winning the Ontario Community Newspapers Association Junior Citizen of the Year Award. Pikangikum's east and west side patrols received the OCNA's only group award, which will be presented by the Lieutenant Governor on April 4. "The youth group really deserves this recognition for all the work they've done in the last two years," stated Roy Fiddler, the nominator of the group.



This group of community-minded youth are extremely dedicated, and I commend them for wanting a better life for themselves, their families and friends.

The Pikangikum Youth Patrol was established in October 1994 after four people committed suicide in the community in the span of one week. Today there are more than 60 volunteers divided into east and west side patrols. Every night, from 6 pm to 6 am, volunteers take shifts patrolling the community in pairs. They look for teenagers who might be suicidal, sniffing gas or drinking. After finding someone who requires assistance, the group gains their confidence with the hope of bringing them home to safety. Volunteers have received training in counselling, conflict resolution and first aid.

The youth patrol has been so successful that they have been asked to go to other first nation communities to initiate the beginning of more patrols.

I ask that all members join me in congratulating this group of fine young adults who have dedicated themselves to improving the lives of their families and friends in the first nation communities throughout northern Ontario. We wish them well.

#### MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

**Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale):** I last night attended two separate meetings on the amalgamation, the megacity bill: one in East York and one in Toronto. More and more people are coming to these meetings opposing the government. Now there is a group of women. More and more women are signing this document called the Women's Declaration Against Amalgamation and for Local Democracy. Women are being urged to oppose this amalgamation, sign this declaration and vote no in local referendums.

I'll give you a few of the reasons why. It says, "Women worked to create services that benefit our community, such as child care, recreation centres, settlement houses, health and safety programs and good public education." It goes on to say, "The added financial burden on municipalities will jeopardize existing and future services which women need: housing for low-income people, long-term care for the elderly, child care, public health services, environmental sustainability programs, programs to prevent violence" and it goes on and on.

I would urge all women who have concerns about this to sign the declaration and to join many of us at Toronto City Hall on Wednesday, February 12, from 4 to 6 pm for a signing ceremony.

1340

#### VINCENZA TRAVALE

**Mr Trevor Pettit (Hamilton Mountain):** I'd like to take the opportunity today to extend my congratulations to a very special constituent of mine in my riding high atop Hamilton Mountain. Last Monday evening, Vincenza Travale received the 1996 Distinguished Citizen Award, sponsored by the Advertising and Sales Club of Hamilton. This award was in recognition of Vincenza's many years of commitment to volunteerism in her community and in recognition of her work as co-chair of Hamilton's 150th, or sesquicentennial, birthday celebrations.

Vincenza Travale spent her career with the Catholic separate school board, where she began as a teacher and ended as an associate director of education. In between, she found the time to contribute to the quality of life in her community.

As a former chair of the board of St Joseph's Hospital, a former chair of Festitalia, a current member of McMaster University's board of governors and the current chair of the board for the Hamilton Community Foundation, a \$15-million endowment fund, Vincenza has shown the vital role that volunteerism plays in the life of the community.

Upon accepting the Distinguished Citizen Award, Vincenza explained her motivation to get involved as a volunteer, and I quote: "From those to whom much is given, much is expected. I've been given much — the gift of life and other talents — and it is best used in the service of others."

On behalf of the citizens of Hamilton Mountain, I thank Vincenza for her tireless efforts and her service to others and congratulate her again on this outstanding award.

#### SCHOOL BUS SAFETY

**Mr Pat Hoy (Essex-Kent):** On November 28, 1996, this Legislature voted unanimously to approve Bill 78 and refer it to the standing committee on resources development. The Minister of Transportation congratulated me on my bill and told the Toronto Sun that he supports it.

I have been waiting not so patiently for the government to call my bill for discussion in committee and have been actively pressuring the committee Chair and the clerk for meetings to discuss my bill for almost a month.

The issue of protecting children from unsafe drivers who refuse to heed school bus warning lights is critical. Yet resources development has met only one day since my bill was passed and has been completely idle since then, with no government business before it.

I repeat: The need to protect Ontario's school children is urgent. The spectre has been raised that this government may well face a lawsuit in the future if it does not pass Bill 78 and another child dies needlessly.

The minister tells the media he supports Bill 78. Is this empty government rhetoric? School bus drivers, police and other stakeholders say that vehicle liability is the only measure which will ensure the conviction of drivers who endanger children's lives. This is not photo radar; it is an eyewitness report of a crime being committed.

I urge you to keep your promise and to immediately bring Bill 78 before the committee for an open public discussion.

#### TAX REDUCTION

**Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine):** As I go to meeting after meeting in my community, I'm hearing more and more of my constituents saying that they understand the connection between the downloading of costs to municipalities, the cuts in services and health and the cuts to kids' education in the classroom, and the Conservative government's income tax break that benefits primarily the wealthy.



More and more of them are saying they don't want the tax cut on that basis. There's one couple in my riding who took it a bit further, and I want to send this over to the Premier, but I'd like to read a couple of these letters into the record.

First of all, October 28: "Mr Premier, we do not want a tax refund financed by those in need, and therefore we're returning it through the cheque enclosed. This money is only to be used for direct assistance to a person in need. Thank you. Yours truly, Andrew Smith and Susan Smith." In that, they included a cheque for \$132.

On January 11 they sent the next instalment with a letter to the Premier; that was a cheque for \$106. They noted that their October cheque hadn't yet been cashed. Shortly after that, they received a letter back from the Premier with the cheque enclosed. He didn't want their money. He said: "As the Premier, I can't get involved in individual cases. Give it to a charity." They said that's not good enough.

They sent a letter to me saying: "We still do not want a tax cut that is financed by those in need. We still wish this money to be used directly to assist a person." They've asked me to help them get this message to the Premier. So I've got these letters and the cheque from October, and am sending it to the Premier. We hope he'll get the message.

#### S-S TECHNOLOGIES HOLDINGS INC

**Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener):** I rise today to congratulate S-S Technologies Holdings Inc of Kitchener. As you know, Mr Speaker, this government's number one priority has been the creation of jobs, and historically job creation has been the result of positive economic activity in the private sector.

The more successful a business is, the larger the workforce it needs. The primary role of government in the job creation process is to create the conditions which attract an increasing number of successful businesses to the province, which encourages existing companies to expand in the province and which assists entrepreneurs to pursue their dream of establishing their own businesses.

This government has made a commitment to improve the business climate in the province. The first message this government promoted was that Ontario was open for business again. However, a government can only do so much to promote positive business conditions. Ultimately, the primary responsibility rests on the shoulders of companies to take advantage of the economic environment we have created.

One company that is taking full advantage of the positive economic climate we as a government are striving to create is S-S Technologies Holdings Inc of Kitchener. S-S Technologies Holdings is a Kitchener-based company of which I am very proud. S-S Technologies was recently named by the Financial Post as one of Canada's 50 best-managed private companies. S-S Tech, with its 195 employees, operates under a self-managed team system. Alexander Mikalachki, a professor at the University of Western Ontario's Ivey school of business says he doesn't know of another company that operates effective teams to the extent that S-S Tech does, and Ivey school MBA students have —

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Thank you very much. Ministry statements? It's time for oral questions.

**Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma):** No government.

**Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines):** How can we have a question period when there are no ministers here?

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker:** There are a couple. Time for oral questions.

**Mr Wildman:** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: You will know that it is the practice prior to question period for the government to notify the opposition of which ministers might be absent. According to the list today only two, Messrs Saunderson and Villeneuve, were to be absent. What gives?

**The Speaker:** That's not for me to know. All I can tell you is it's time for oral questions. I'm looking now to the official opposition. If anyone is not prepared, I'll move on.

### ORAL QUESTIONS

#### HOSPITAL RESTRUCTURING

**Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition):** I have a question for the Premier. Yesterday, or this week alone, 6,000 people gathered in Grimsby, 3,000 gathered in Fort Erie, 2,000 gathered in Port Colborne, and just to give you some idea of the scope here, when we talk about the 6,000 people who gathered in Grimsby, that's one third of the population — that would be the equivalent of 200,000 people from the city of Toronto gathering here on the front steps of Queen's Park — and they all had the same message.

They said that their hospitals are about to be closed and that they have to date been saving lives in their communities, and they're calling on you to keep the promise you made during the election not to close hospitals. So I want to ask you Premier, are you about to keep that promise? That's the one you made during the leaders' debate when you said, "Certainly I can guarantee you it's not my plan to close hospitals." Are you going to keep that promise, Premier?

**Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier):** I think the Minister of Health will know what's happening there.

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** The Minister of Health.

**Hon David Johnson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Minister of Health, Government House Leader):** There is a challenge certainly, because as we all know the federal government has reduced payments to the province of Ontario by some \$2 billion —

**Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex South):** I hear whining again. I hear a whiner.

**Hon David Johnson:** — but I am pleased to say again today that this government is living up to its promises in all aspects of government, but particularly in health care, because we said we would spend at least \$17.4 billion in health and the budget this year was \$17.7 billion —

**Mrs Elinor Caplan (Orillia):** You promised not to close hospitals. That was your promise.



**Hon David Johnson:** — and the member opposite can count on the fact that next year the budget will be at least \$17.4 billion and probably more.

1350

In terms of the people in Grimsby, the government is delighted that people are taking an interest in their hospital. We know that people have this interest and the government shares their interest. I would say that the district health council is looking at this issue. The district health councils and the restructuring commission are making plans to improve health care services and hospital services in our communities, and I think we have to let that process unroll.

**The Speaker:** Could I caution the members from both Essex South and Oriole to come to order while the minister is answering the question.

*Interjection.*

**The Speaker:** I am shocked you're shocked actually.

**Mr McGuinty:** The Premier and the Minister of Health on a regular basis in this House and outside of it try to lay blame for what they're doing to our health care system on the federal government. I want to make it perfectly clear once again. It was the Premier who said, during the course of the campaign, "Certainly I can guarantee you it is not my plan to close hospitals." This Premier said that. In addition, during the course of the campaign, the Premier said the following in writing: "The restructuring of federal transfer payments does not affect the Harris commitment to protecting Ontario's health care system." So let's put this to bed once and for all.

It is clear, Minister, that you simply cannot understand the important role that hospitals play in our rural communities. They have a greater proportion of an aging population, they have greater distances to travel between their communities and you can't understand how hard it is to attract doctors to a community that doesn't have a hospital.

Minister, you do not understand what effect your cuts are having on small-town Ontario. That's quite obvious. You do not understand that it's not like Toronto and —

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

**Hon David Johnson:** What this government does understand is that we need to improve our health care system and we need to improve hospitals. That is precisely why this government has already to date announced over \$600 million in improvements, improvements in terms of cardiac care, cancer, dialysis, long-term care, more money for hospitals in high-growth areas. Over \$600 million has been announced.

In terms of what people have said, if we want to see what people have said, I'll quote from the Toronto Star of December 13 last year. In the Toronto Star article, it says: "McGuinty says he might close hospitals as part of a plan for better-integrated health care services across the province." It says McGuinty might close hospitals. Are we being consistent here? This government has embarked upon a course of improving hospital care in Ontario.

**Mr McGuinty:** The minister doesn't understand, I think, the importance of this issue. Eleven thousand Ontarians left the comfort of their living rooms and marched because you are about to close their hospitals. They are frightened by the actions of your government.

Not only are you shutting down hospitals, you are going to shut down emergency wards. You can't tell me that this is solely in response to the district health councils' recommendation. You have effectively put a gun to their heads and said: "The money's coming out. You guys make it happen." In addition, you are slashing \$1.3 billion out of those hospitals that are lucky enough to survive.

Minister, will you not admit today that you are not about improving the health care system that we can offer to Ontarians? What you are about to do is to decrease our ability to care for the health of Ontarians, but especially so in small and rural communities.

**Hon David Johnson:** The reality is the Liberal Party, during the last election, said \$17 billion was enough for the health care system of Ontario. Progressive Conservatives said no, that was not enough, that we needed more money in our health care system. We said at least \$17.4 billion and we have exceeded that.

We have followed through on the district health council model appointed by the previous government. The previous government spent \$26 million on the district health councils to come forward with expert advice in their communities. That advice is coming forward, that advice will be given to the restructuring commission, the restructuring commission will listen to the people of Ontario and at the end of the day we will have a better hospital system in Ontario, serving the needs, putting the patients first.

**The Speaker:** New question, leader of the official opposition.

**Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines):** You can't trust the Tories with health.

**Mr McGuinty:** Yes, you can't trust this government with health.

## EDUCATION FINANCING

**Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition):** We'll move on to education now, so my next question is for the Minister of Education. Over the last three weeks you have been using \$6.2 billion — and this is your number, not mine — to describe the amount of money municipalities would have had to spend on education by the year 2000. You've now said municipalities will not have to spend anything on education. I have a very simple question for you: Will you commit, here and now, to making sure that all of that \$6.2 billion you have taken on is actually going to be spent on education?

**Hon John Snobelen (Minister of Education and Training):** It's a pleasure to stand in the House and once again say, yes, this government has committed to removing the burden on the property taxpayer of paying for education, a burden that has been increasing; and yes, it's true that that increase has represented 5% a year on average over the last decade; and yes, it's true that that amount of money would equal \$6.2 billion by the year 2000. The province has finally taken that burden off the property taxpayer and taken it on provincially to make sure there's an equitable and fair funding system for every student across the province.

Our promise and our commitment remains clear today: It's to increase student achievement across our system



and to meet the funding needs no matter what they are for every individual student right across the province. We have said that very clearly and I'm glad to be able to say it again today.

**Mr McGuinty:** What that means is that this minister is intent on removing a substantial amount of money from education funding in this province and spending it on a tax cut which will have no benefit to Ontario children whatsoever. As you well know, cuts are already being felt in the classroom. We have today larger class sizes in Ontario. We have significant cuts to special education programs throughout the province. We have had dozens of school boards eliminate junior kindergarten.

I want to ask you again very directly: Will you reinvest any savings back into the classroom? Will you spend every single penny of that \$6.2 billion you say municipalities were going to spend, will you make sure that additional money is actually going to be spent on education?

**Hon Mr Snobelen:** Yes. In fact, we have witnessed over the course of the last year that despite the fact this government has continued to fund junior kindergarten at exactly the same rate as other programs, despite the fact we've protected special needs funding, there have been some reductions in our system that have hurt students. That's why we have changed our system of governance, that's why we've taken on this burden of responsibility for funding education: To make sure that every dollar makes a difference to the young people of Ontario, because it's our commitment that every student have the same opportunity for a high-quality education.

The member opposite asks what this means. It means that this government measures success not in how much money it can waste in the name of education but at how high a level the students of Ontario can achieve, grade by grade, year by year, province-wide.

**Mr McGuinty:** It is clear that not only can we not trust this government with respect to health care, we cannot trust it with respect to education. Ontario now ranks 46th in North America — and this is an embarrassment — on per student funding for students at the elementary and secondary levels. In 1993-94 we were 29th. We've gone from 29th to 46th.

The minister talks about improving the quality of education. Well, your neglect is showing right now in class scores. Our children right now are being hurt by your actions. We have got to ready ourselves for the 21st century, and we're not going to do that if you take money out of education and give it to those who don't need it who are looking for a tax cut.

I want a guarantee right now, Minister. I've given you a couple of chances. I want a guarantee. I want to know that you're not going to cut any more from schools. You're going to have \$6.2 billion. I want to know that children are not going to pay for your tax cut. Can you give me that guarantee right here and now?

**Hon Mr Snobelen:** The member opposite can't take yes for an answer. Yes, there has been a history over the course of the last decade of mediocre results by our students, and that is not okay. It doesn't represent the ability of our students; it doesn't represent the ability of

our teachers. What's wrong? What's wrong is simple. There are problems in our system where we are not directing the funds in education into places where it matters to students.

We are taking the very dramatic actions, very serious actions that it'll take to redress that. We made an announcement of clear standards of achievement in every grade. That's been missing in this province for years. We are restoring that. We have talked about assessment of student abilities right across the province. We are doing that. We have committed, and let me commit again today, to making sure we meet the needs of every individual student right across the province. That's a promise that's clear to the people of Ontario and that's a promise I'm glad to restate today.

1400

## HOSPITAL FINANCING

**Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River):** My first question is for the Premier. Yesterday, we witnessed one of the most shameful displays of communications manipulation ever by a Minister of Health. Yesterday the Minister of Health cut hospital budgets in this province by a further \$435 million, but then tried to stand up in this Legislature and say he was doing something good for hospitals. This means that in two years you have taken \$800 million across the board from hospital budgets. Thousands of nurses have been laid off, other health care workers have been laid off and the impact is being felt by patients all across this province.

The question is a simple one: How do you expect hospitals across this province to provide the quality care that patients need as you force them to lay off thousands of nurses and health care workers? How do you expect them to provide the care?

**Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier):** I know the Minister of Health could answer that.

**Hon David Johnson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Minister of Health, Government House Leader):** To the leader of the third party, the reality is that in this fiscal year, the year 1996-97, we have asked hospitals to look for administrative savings, savings in efficiencies, savings because of technological advances, of \$365 million. We are pulling \$365 million out of the system in terms of waste and duplication. We have announced investments of over \$600 million into the health care system, over \$600 million in terms of —

*Applause.*

**Hon David Johnson:** Those reinvestments of over \$600 million include kidney dialysis, cardiac services, diabetes, cancer, funding into restructuring, long-term care, the Trillium drug expansion and on and on and on it goes.

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Thank you, Minister. Supplementary.

**Mr Hampton:** You can tell by the weak applause from the government's back bench that even the government backbenchers know this isn't selling out there.

Minister, you think you can walk into this House and make empty announcements day after day and people are going to swallow it, when in every community across this



province thousands of nurses and health care workers are being laid off and services are being shut down.

The fact of the matter is that you've come into this Legislature, as your predecessor came into this Legislature, and have made announcements, but that money has not done a thing out there either in terms of cardiac care or in terms of some of the dialysis units, because the same hospitals are having to lay off nurses because you're cutting the global budgets.

Let's be clear about this. You took \$365 million last year, you're taking \$435 million in the year we're about to enter, \$800 million overall, and through your hospital closing commission you're taking even more: \$30 million in Thunder Bay per year, \$40 million in Sudbury. Why don't you be absolutely clear with people? You're cutting health care in this province.

**Hon David Johnson:** The reason I couldn't say that is because it's not true. This government has increased spending. This government said it would spend \$17.4 billion in health. In actual fact, we'll be spending at least \$17.7 billion, \$17.7 billion being the budget, but my guess is that at the end of the day the actual spending will be higher than that.

The member says, for example, in terms of cardiac care that nothing is being done, yet the government has invested some \$18 million into cardiac care in the province to increase the number of surgeries by 19%. Over half of those have already been realized. We are seeing progress not only in cardiac care, in cancer treatment, dialysis, the Trillium drug program — right across the board this government is reinvesting in hospitals and health care in Ontario.

**The Speaker:** Final supplementary.

**Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre):** Minister, you clearly haven't got any answers around how you expect hospitals to absorb another cost saving of anywhere from 4% to 10%. It's absolutely ridiculous for you to stand here in this House among all of us who hear the stories day after day in our constituencies about the effect of your cuts on actual patients, actual families in actual communities.

We all know that many people have received their notices — over 8,000 in the last nine months alone. We all hear about the long waiting lists for different kinds of surgery. We all hear about the problems with emergency rooms being closed because there are no beds available in hospitals. We know that there are serious difficulties faced by individual people. Your bland assurance to people that everything is fine because when it all comes out in the wash you're going to guarantee that this money is being spent is not being seen in the communities.

Minister, how can you possibly defend taking these kinds of dollars out of the hospitals when the hospitals have made it very clear to you that restructuring is —

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

**Hon David Johnson:** I find it interesting to hear the message from the NDP in terms of a criticism with regard to the hospital situation when we know full well that over the last 10 years, primarily during the term of the NDP, that about 8,500 hospital beds were closed in the province of Ontario — 8,500 beds closed, primarily under the NDP.

We know full well that the present system, in terms of re-examining the hospitals through the district health councils, was initiated by the NDP, some \$26 million to start the process. This is a process involving the people of Ontario, a process involving the hospitals, a process to look for and find efficiencies. I mentioned Shelburne the other day. Two hospitals in Shelburne got together and formed one administration; the cost of one administration has been removed from the taxpayers. These are the kinds of savings we need in our system.

**The Speaker:** New question; the leader of the third party.

**Mr Hampton:** I would just say to the Minister of Health that we have seen how much you're taking out of health care, but we haven't seen any community reinvestment; we haven't seen the community services that need to be there if people aren't going to be able to go to their hospital.

1410

## MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

**Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River):** My next question is to the minister responsible for municipal affairs, the other minister who is taking a lot of money out of the pockets of Ontario taxpayers. Three weeks ago the Minister of Municipal Affairs announced his massive download of health and social services on to the municipal property taxpayer. The minister boasts about a \$1-billion community reinvestment fund at the municipal level, and he claims this will be an even tradeoff.

But on January 20, when I asked you if you were going to help Toronto with the download problem you've put to them, you said to me, "If anybody can't cut or reduce expenditures by...5% or 6% out of \$7 billion, they shouldn't" run for office. Minister, a lot of people are beginning to think your whole process is a fraud. Tell us that isn't true.

**Hon Al Leach (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing):** It isn't true. I think if you looked in today's paper and went over the numbers that were printed in the Star — these are the Metropolitan Toronto numbers — they're indicating that they're going to have social programs of \$1.655 billion. They had \$234 million. That leaves \$1.2 million coming off education. That leaves them with a shortfall of about \$200 million on a \$7-billion budget for a new city of Toronto. That's about, what, 3%? If they can't find 3%, I think they should probably find another line of work.

**Mr Hampton:** It's interesting how quickly the minister forgets numbers, because Metropolitan Toronto, in adding up the numbers, the continuing numbers this week, has come up with an effective download of at least \$531 million. That's what you've downloaded so far. Even Alan Tonks, who sometimes agrees with you —

*Interjections.*

**Mr Hampton:** The Premier can shout and wail all he wants. The fact of the matter is, it's a —

**Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine):** If you want to answer questions, why don't you answer when it's put to you, Mike?



**Mr Tony Silipo (Dovercourt):** Refer it to Mike. He wants to answer it.

**Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South):** The Premier wants to answer this question.

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Order. I don't get to direct the questions. Government members, if you could come to order I'd appreciate it, during their questions as well. Leader.

**Mr Hampton:** Minister, it comes to this: Will you guarantee Metropolitan Toronto that you will have in this so-called reinvestment fund \$531 million for them to in effect handle your download, and will you guarantee to the other municipalities across Ontario that you will give them the amount of money they need to handle the millions of dollars of downloading? Will you guarantee that \$1-billion fund will be there for them?

**Hon Mr Leach:** Again I'll refer to the numbers that were provided by Metropolitan Toronto. According to the numbers they provide, they will be —

**Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt):** This is quite the research you've done here, Al.

**Hon Mr Leach:** It's a whole lot better than his, Gerry. We've taken their numbers. They've also indicated that —

**Ms Lankin:** Where are those studies? I know you gave them instead to the Toronto Star so that you can get the information —

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker:** Minister.

**Hon Mr Leach:** The source of these numbers is the Metropolitan Toronto community services — right from the source, okay? Included in those numbers is \$369 million for social housing. As we have stated repeatedly, we're just starting negotiations with the federal government and the municipalities. It's doubtful that switch will take place next year. So if you take that \$369 million out of the equation, Metropolitan Toronto will be \$147 million ahead of the game.

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker:** Final supplementary.

**Mr Hampton:** We see today the depth of the Minister of Municipal Affairs's research capacity. People have been asking him for months to turn over his studies and his figures and he says, "Well, it'll all come in due time." Today we see the capacity of his research arm. He got one clipping out of the Toronto Star and the Minister of Municipal Affairs calls that his figures. If it weren't so pathetic it would be laughable, but it is truly pathetic.

Let me tell you what everyone thinks you're up to. What people believe is that you're going to go after all the municipalities — Metropolitan Toronto, Ottawa, Sudbury, Thunder Bay, Windsor, Hamilton — and you're going to go after their reserve funds. You're going to say to them, "You have to spend all of your reserve funds covering this downloading before there's any reinvestment fund available from the provincial government." Will you guarantee all those municipalities that you won't be going after their reserve funds, you won't force them to spend their reserve funds to cover your downloading?

**Hon Mr Leach:** Just to recap for the member opposite to tell him what we really are doing, we're going to be

taking \$5.4 billion off the property tax immediately — that'll be about \$6.2 billion by the year 2000 — and we're asking the municipalities to assume certain services to offset that. That's the premise.

The numbers I've been quoting today have been provided by Metropolitan Toronto. Using their own numbers, it shows in 1997 a savings of \$147 million. Would that equate to a tax cut? I think it probably could if we wanted to do that. I'm sure the member wouldn't want to challenge Metropolitan Toronto's own numbers. Let the numbers speak for themselves.

## CHILD CARE

**Mrs Elinor Caplan (Oriole):** My question is to the Minister of Community and Social Services. Yesterday the Minister of Community and Social Services was forced to admit that despite their grand announcements in the last budget, the Harris government, and this minister in particular, have not spent one nickel of the \$40 million that they announced for child care. While children are waiting, the minister is making excuses. There are 34,000 children across the province, 17,000 in Metropolitan Toronto alone, in need of child care.

I say to the minister, admit that you never planned on spending money in the first place, and admit as well that your mega-week dumping of services means that child care will be competing for funding at the local municipal level for municipal taxpayer dollars against other services like long-term care, social assistance, social housing, garbage pickup and sewers.

Will you tell me and this House today what it's going to take before you start delivering on your promises to make children a priority and child care a priority?

**Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Community and Social Services):** I'm not in the habit of admitting things that are untrue. Our commitment stands. We have new money for child care. We've always been clear that this new money will be allocated pending the decisions of the child care reform and the Who Does What initiatives.

Second, one of the reasons across this province that there are children on subsidy waiting lists is not because Ontario has been reluctant to put its money on the table; our 80 cents has been on the table. The difficulty has been that some of the municipalities have not put their share on so those families can have that support. One of the reasons, under the Who Does What initiative, that we want to have mandatory services with municipalities is so we can meet that need which the member has pointed out today.

**Mrs Caplan:** I listened very carefully to the minister's answer and I want to tell this House and all Ontario what the Harris government and this minister are really doing when it comes to child care. Not only is this minister not spending the money that was promised to children and their families, but now the minister is cancelling approved projects and asking for the money back from child care.

1420

Today in the gallery is Catherine Blake, who has worked with the Small Miracles child care centre in Clarington, a community in Durham. They've worked tirelessly for six years on this project. It was approved



three years ago despite the fact that Clarington has the fifth-fastest-growing population in Canada, in Durham region, and a community where children in need of service make up 20%. This project was approved three years ago by your ministry. You have cancelled that, and on January 14 they received a letter from you saying their project had been terminated. Minister, if you really have the commitment — you've got \$40 million on the table — stand up today, reinstate this project, tell them they're going to get their money or at least —

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Thank you, member. Minister.

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker:** Order.

**Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines):** Pretty smug over there. Pretty smug.

**Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier):** Is that what they are saying in Thornhill?

**Mr Bradley:** No, in Grimsby, where they are talking about your promises.

**The Speaker:** Member for St Catharines, and the Premier, thank you. It would be helpful if we could just have a little quiet.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** This government has been very clear that we are trying to shift our resources, not for capital expenditures but to try and make sure that there are more dollars for front-line services. For example, the member mentioned earlier the lack of fee subsidy support for low-income working families that need child care. That is one of the things we think that money should be going towards.

I appreciate that in many of the communities they have capital needs —

**Mrs Caplan:** So you are cancelling projects, asking for the money back.

**The Speaker:** Member for Oriole.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** I appreciate that in some of these communities there are capital needs. One of the problems that our government found in the Ministry of Community and Social Services was that there were many projects which the previous government had approved, and unfortunately the capital dollars to proceed with those projects had not been set aside in order to justify those approvals. It's a very difficult situation, and I sympathize with them, but we have to make this decision to put that money into things like fee subsidies.

#### SCHOOL CURRICULUM MATERIALS

**Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma):** I have a question of the Minister of Education and Training. Could the minister make it clear whether he and his government favour banning books in Ontario, and is it his intention, once he gets complete control over the education system, to ban books that are currently on the curriculum of high schools?

**Hon John Snobelen (Minister of Education and Training):** I thank the member opposite for the question. It's this government's intention —

*Interjection.*

**Hon Mr Snobelen:** One more time, Mr Speaker. It's this government's intention to lift student achievement right across this province. That's what this government's

intention is. It's this government's intention to make sure that our taxpayer dollars are spent not in the name of education but in a way that makes a difference with students.

I have said on several occasions with direct reference to materials in the classroom that of course there is a board responsibility now for those materials. The province supports that with circular 14.

We are now looking for new ways in this new information age of making sure that our children are protected, to make sure they're protected from some of the information devices that are there. We are working in cooperation with technology folks, we are working in conjunction with boards and other people in education, to make sure that Ontario has a modern response to the kind of information that's available in classrooms. It's also our intention to make sure that students have access to that modern technology.

**Mr Wildman:** I was referring specifically to censorship and the banning of books. The minister will know that his parliamentary assistant, the member for Halton Centre, is quoted in the press as being in support of Reverend Ken Campbell and his efforts to have a particular book banned in the Halton Board of Education, from the schools in Milton. As a matter of fact, in the same article, Reverend Campbell is quoted as saying, "We were told that the legislation" — that is, Bill 104 — "will restore to the minister authority to overthrow board decisions such as this," that is, the board decision to keep a book on the restricted curriculum for grade 12 in that area.

The member for Halton Centre, the honourable parliamentary assistant for education and training, has said that he wants to see the book banned and he thinks the legislation will make that possible. Is that your purpose? Do you intend to ban books in Ontario?

**Hon Mr Snobelen:** Let's be very clear about this. There's no need to hide from this at all. There are a lot of people in Halton who are concerned about a book called *Foxfire*. They have written to my office about it. They've directed their inquiries to me personally. They've talked to the member for Halton Centre, they've talked to the member for Halton North and other members, and they're concerned. They think the book is not appropriate for reading by students, by children, by young people, by adolescents.

I am very concerned, as I'm sure the member opposite is, that we have some freedom of expression in schools but that it is reasonably controlled by community standards. That's the standard we've been held to in this country for many years. Those community standards change. I personally believe the best way to reflect community standards is to listen to the parents in a local area, and I hope parent groups will have something to say about this in the future.

**Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South):** This harkens back to 1939.

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Member for Cochrane South, I ask you to come to order.

*Interjection.*

**The Speaker:** I don't want to argue with you. I'm asking you to come to order.

## AIR QUALITY

**Mrs Margaret Marland (Mississauga South):** My question is for the Minister of Environment and Energy. I know you are aware that for the past two years I have been very involved in representing the concerns of my community about the environmental impact, if any, of the expansion of Petro-Canada's lubricants plant in my riding of Mississauga South.

In recent months the plant's emissions of sulphur dioxide gas have been the subject of a hearing before the Environmental Appeal Board. I'm sure you are as pleased as I am that all the parties to the hearing reached an agreement concerning the plant's sulphur dioxide emissions and related air quality issues. This agreement was accepted by the Environmental Appeal Board on January 15, 1997. Minister, can you tell us about the terms of the agreement?

**Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Environment and Energy):** First, I'd like to commend the member for Mississauga South for all her hard work with regard to finding an appropriate solution to a very difficult problem.

The agreement which was ratified by the board calls for Petro-Canada to have a concentration rate for sulphur dioxide at 20% or less of the allowable limit in the province. As well, Petro-Canada has committed \$250,000 to a trust fund under the management of Petro-Canada and Greenpeace, which will conduct research into the airshed management of the area.

Our government applauds joint solutions. We look forward to cooperation between industry, community organizations and environmental groups like this.

**Mrs Marland:** Minister, as you said, Petro-Canada has agreed to reduce its emissions of sulphur dioxide so that the concentration of this gas is 20% or less of the limit permitted by Ontario's air pollution regulations, but during the hearing before the Environmental Appeal Board expert witnesses pointed to the need to revise Ontario's air quality regulations. Many of our limits on the emission of contaminants have not been updated since the 1970s, but we have made a great deal of progress since then in the technology that is available to control pollution. What steps is your ministry taking to bring Ontario's air quality regulations into the 21st century?

**Hon Mr Sterling:** This is a very pertinent question because not only was it recognized in this hearing but it was also recognized by the Provincial Auditor recently that we are 20 years behind in Ontario in bringing our air quality standards up to snuff. Quite frankly, we're going to do that in this province and we have a three-year plan under way to attack that problem in a serious and meaningful way.

In addition, we have done some other things as well. We have enhanced fine particulate monitoring in Ontario by some 400%. New technologies are enabling us to maintain a state-of-the-art air monitoring system. As well, we are seriously exploring the possibility of implementing a mandatory vehicle emission and maintenance program, which was never put forward by previous governments but has been put forward by one province in this country and several states in the United States.

The ministry is also aggressively working with a variety of stakeholders to reduce the contributions to smog in this province. In total, we are attacking this —

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Minister, thank you very much.

1430

## HOSPITAL RESTRUCTURING

**Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines):** I have a question for the Premier of Ontario. People who attended a rally in Grimsby last night, the largest single public gathering of people the town has ever seen, requested that I ask you a question about the future of their hospital. They believed you when you said the following during the leaders' debate during the last election campaign, and I quote you directly, Premier: "Certainly I can guarantee you it's not my plan to close hospitals."

As the person who made this solemn promise, as the Premier of this province, as the person now in charge, will you guarantee to the people of Grimsby, St Catharines, Fort Erie, Port Colborne and Niagara-on-the-Lake that they will not have their hospitals closed?

**Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier):** I don't mind answering the question at all, if you wish to talk about commitments in the campaign. Your leader in the campaign said, "Yes, I'd be prepared to close hospitals." I was asked, was I planning to close hospitals, so I said, "No, I'm not planning to close hospitals." But I said, because the NDP had a study out, a restructuring study — district health councils, hospitals themselves were saying, "Some of us should close." That wasn't my plan; those were hospital plans, district health council plans, NDP plans and your Liberal leader's plans. They weren't my plans.

We clearly said in the campaign that we would wait for the study that was being done by the New Democratic Party and we would analyse that. Our response to that was to appoint the restructuring committee so that communities themselves could make the decisions, could decide how the health care dollars could best be spent in their areas and their regions. That's the process that's being followed all across the province.

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Supplementary?

**Mr Bradley:** I have the answer from the Premier in the initial question, which was that he will not live up to the promise, so I don't have a supplementary.

## WORKWEEK

**Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre):** My question is for the Minister of Labour. Minister, as you know, workers have been struggling for over 100 years to shorten the standard workweek. We know that the shorter workweek serves two purposes: first, it provides a better quality of life for workers and their families, and second, it creates opportunity for jobs for the unemployed. It makes absolutely no sense to have people working longer and longer hours while we have growing numbers of unemployed. Yet your government's Red Tape Review Commission moves in exactly the wrong direction and suggests that we move to a 50-hour workweek.



Since 1948 in Ontario, we've had a 48-hour workweek. In fact, the Mining Operation Act provided a 48-hour workweek in 1890. Minister, you owe it to workers in this province and their families and to the unemployed to stand in your place today and say you have absolutely no intention of lengthening the standard workweek from 48 to 50 hours. Please stand in your place and say that today.

**Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Labour):** I am well aware of the fact that the maximum hours of work at the present time are 48 hours a week. As I have indicated in this House on several occasions, we are planning to do a review of the Employment Standards Act. At that time, all the issues that are part of the Employment Standards Act will be reviewed. Obviously, that issue is going to be of extreme importance to all the stakeholders, and I will be looking forward to their input on that issue.

**Mr Christopherson:** That's an absolutely shameful answer to give to workers in this province and their families and to the unemployed who need to see, if anything, a shorter workweek. You ought to be standing in your place saying today that this whole idea is dead in the water. It's shameful that you aren't.

That same report goes on to say, contrary to assurances you've given me in this House that you're not going to water down the right to refuse unsafe work, that indeed you're going to make changes that would "significantly reduce the number of work stoppages" by putting in tough new criteria. Minister, we know all about your code words. "Significantly reduce" means you are going to water down the right to refuse unsafe work. It says so clearly in that report.

For God's sake, start putting some meat behind the empty language you continually give in this House. Stand in your place today and say you have no intention of moving on that recommendation and that you've no intention of watering down the right to refuse unsafe work in the province of Ontario.

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** I think the member opposite would agree with me that these are issues of extreme importance to the people of Ontario, and that's exactly why we are giving them the opportunity to respond to our discussion paper on the Occupational Health and Safety Act and also the Employment Standards Act.

**Mr Christopherson:** All you've done is to take away rights for workers. That's all you've done.

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Member for Hamilton Centre, please come to order.

**Mr Christopherson:** This is disgusting, Speaker. We listen to this language every day.

**The Speaker:** Member for Hamilton Centre, I warn you to come to order.

**Mr Christopherson:** Absolutely disgusting.

**The Speaker:** I warn the member for Hamilton Centre to come to order.

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** As we start to take a look at reviewing both those acts, we are responding to exactly the concerns you've brought to my attention today. We're going to have a complete discussion on those issues, just as you've asked us to.

*Interjection.*

**The Speaker:** Member for Hamilton Centre, I want to warn you to come to order. It's being very disruptive. You know you're being clearly heard around the chamber. I ask you to come to order.

## TUITION FEES

**Mr John R. Baird (Nepean):** My question is to the Minister of Education and Training. While there's been a tremendous amount of discussion in the public of the government's plan to take education funding off the residential property tax, something that meets with strong support in my community, there are other important issues with respect to post-secondary education.

I understand that the University of Toronto has been lobbying the provincial government for full deregulation of tuition fees. I also understand that a number of other universities across the province have been lobbying for a 20% increase in tuition fees over the next academic year. Could the Minister of Education confirm this?

**Hon John Snobelen (Minister of Education and Training):** It's true that some universities, including the University of Toronto, have called on this government to have tuition fee increases immediately of everything from 20% to a fully deregulated tuition environment. This obviously would have an enormous shock on students, that size of tuition fee increase suddenly.

While the Smith panel encouraged this government to look at deregulation of tuition fees, it also suggested that we must move forward on income-contingent loans packages so students would have a way of meeting these increased tuitions and so there would be real accessibility for all students in the province.

This government remains committed to that accessibility. We've demonstrated that in increasing our support to the Ontario student assistance program. We've demonstrated it by starting the Ontario student opportunity trust fund. We've demonstrated it in a number of ways. I want to make very clear to the member and to all members in this chamber that any movement on complete fee deregulation must — must — have an income-contingent loans package available for students before we even consider that.

**Mr Baird:** I would certainly agree that those demands from a good number of universities across the province of Ontario are far too excessive in the absence of an income-contingent loan repayment plan. There's growing support for an income-contingent loan repayment plan, support from students, student governments, university and college officials and parents across the province of Ontario. Could the minister advise the House where we stand with respect to the implementation of an income-contingent loan repayment proposal?

**Hon Mr Snobelen:** I'm very pleased to restate the commitments we made in the Common Sense Revolution, which we walked door to door in this province and made to the people of Ontario. We had a promise that we would pursue an income-contingent loans program specifically because we believe that meant that no student with the appropriate qualifications and the desire would be denied access to our institutions.



We have made many attempts over the past few months to get our federal government to act on this issue. I wrote on January 24 to Minister Pettigrew, the federal Minister of Human Resources Development, to ask him to act immediately on this, to get us an income-contingent loans package. We've done a lot of work on it. I think it's time to move on it, to harmonize the federal and provincial loan programs and to make sure that tax deductions are available for interest on student debt. We believe these are important steps to protect accessibility and to make sure students can repay that debt. I've called on Minister Pettigrew to take action on this and I hope in the coming federal budget we'll see that action.

1440

### TRUCKING SAFETY

**Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-Walkerville):** I have a question for the Minister of Transportation. Last week a safety blitz that was conducted just east of Toronto found that more than half the trucks that were stopped were taken off the road. How does the minister react to that and how will this result affect his plans with respect to road safety in Ontario?

**Hon Al Palladini (Minister of Transportation):** I certainly want to thank the member for the question. Obviously, our staff are out there doing the job that the people of Ontario expect us to do, and we're not going to stop until truck safety in the province of Ontario is the best in North America. We will continue to do that job.

**Mr Duncan:** I think the implications of the blitz are that you haven't had a plan, that despite all of your bluster and all of your press releases, road safety in this province has not only not improved, it's probably gotten worse. According to your own ministry statistics, the wheels are coming off road safety in Ontario.

Today we see that federal deputy ministers are planning to meet. The families of victims of road accidents are calling upon you to act more quickly. They are calling upon you to do the things that have been recommended to you by countless studies, by the inquiry that was held into the Worona death and also by recommendations of the OPP and the CAA.

When are you going to react? If you won't react, will you do what we've asked you to do repeatedly, have a legislative inquiry into this initiative, into road safety and road maintenance in this province, so that people of Ontario can be assured that their roads will continue to be safe and they can travel between points without fear of their lives?

**Hon Mr Palladini:** I'm very happy to see that finally the federal government has taken some interest since my appointment as Minister of Transportation and, I believe, the first discussion I had with the then Minister of Transport, Mr Young, with the concern I had for a national safety policy that was not coherent in the country of Canada. I've also, I would like to tell my honourable critic, had numerous discussions with ministers across Canada.

Would you believe that one of the things that came across is, "We don't have a problem in the rest of Canada." Well, that's not true. We have a problem not only in the GTA but in all the provinces of Canada. I'm glad that we're finally going to see some action and

maybe collectively we can resolve this problem that exists not just in the GTA but across Canada.

### PAY EQUITY

**Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale):** I have a question to the minister responsible for women's issues. Last week when the NDP pay equity laws guaranteeing fair pay for women came under attack from the Tory task force on red tape — a panel made up of 10 men and one woman, I might add — we heard nothing at all from the minister responsible for women's issues in this government. Reading last Thursday's *Ottawa Citizen*, I found out why. This article, a long profile and interview with Dianne Cunningham, says, "The minister believes women don't earn as much as men partly because they choose part-time work. She said, 'Women choose to live their lives in a very different way.'"

No wonder the minister doesn't speak up when pay equity is under attack, or when the employment equity laws that encourage promotion of women are repealed, or when the Premier says working women are to blame if their children go to school hungry. Pay equity has nothing to do with part-time work. Does the minister really believe that women choose to be paid less?

**Hon Dianne Cunningham (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, minister responsible for women's issues):** As the member well knows, in political life when we're asked questions sometimes parts of responses are published and other parts are missing, so I appreciate the opportunity to answer the question. We have had input, all of us within the government, on the whole issue of pay equity. The Premier on many occasions and certainly the Minister of Labour have responded to this question by saying that more money than any other government has been put into the budget of the Ontario government this year to respond to the issue of pay equity within this government.

That is a very positive, very factual and extremely important indication by the government as to its commitment to the issue of pay equity. As far as what goes into it is concerned, that's an issue many of us have spoken to over the years, and those are not the only two components that should be taken into consideration. I'd be happy to have this discussion with the member at some further opportunity.

**Ms Churley:** I can't understand how you could say that with a straight face. You're the government that cut proxy pay equity, which was pay equity for the most vulnerable, lowest-paid women in Ontario; your government cut 140,000 of them. Get your numbers straight here.

The article in the *Ottawa Citizen* says that the minister has some ideas for improving the economic status of women. It says she believes that this can be achieved through deficit cutting and training opportunities for unemployed women, for example, under the province's workfare program. What workfare program? What these women really need are real training programs and real jobs being created and real pay equity. Will you guarantee today that you will talk to the Minister of Labour and your Premier to reinstate the proxy method so those low-paid women —



**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Thank you very much, Minister.

**Hon Mrs Cunningham:** The response to the question is that everybody who's interested in this whole issue knows right now that there has been a report made to the government on pay equity, the Read report. There are some 21 recommendations. I studied it very carefully. I have written a full-page advisory note to the Minister of Labour. We have met on this issue on more than one occasion. I have met with representatives of the Pay Equity Commission. I have met with women who are interested in this whole issue and have given my best advice.

The response specifically about the proxy method is that there is no indication that's a method that worked for women, and it's not a method that is used, to the best of my knowledge — if the member wants to give me better advice — anywhere in Canada. Having said that, I will say now that we will be responding to this report at the appropriate time.

#### RESIGNATION OF MEMBER FOR WINDSOR-RIVERSIDE

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** I beg to inform the House that a vacancy has occurred in the membership of the House by reason of the resignation of Dave Cooke, member for the electoral district of Windsor-Riverside, effective January 31, 1997. Accordingly, my warrant has been issued to the chief election officer for the issue of a writ for a by-election.

#### PETITIONS

##### CLASS SIZE

**Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury):** My petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the private member's bill introduced by Rick Bartolucci, MPP for the riding of Sudbury, limits the number of pupils that may be enrolled in a class in a school in Ontario; and

"Whereas this limit depends on the grade level of the class; and

"Whereas studies have concluded that there are clear benefits from smaller class sizes; and

"Whereas there is greater student involvement and interaction; and

"Whereas there is improved student performance; and

"Whereas there is the opportunity for greater individualization; and

"Whereas smaller class sizes allow for a more varied and constructive education for students;

"Therefore, we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support this private member's bill as it enhances classroom education."

I affix my name to it.

#### WORKPLACE FATALITIES

**Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre):** I have a petition from my community in Hamilton.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the tragic deaths of two workers at Dofasco's bayfront steel mill raise serious questions about safety procedures; and

"Whereas the representatives of the workers, the United Steelworkers of America, were stonewalled and shut out of the early stages of the investigation; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris Conservatives have abolished the Workplace Health and Safety Agency, and laid off the agency's staff of safety training experts; and

"Whereas the Harris government has reduced the requirements for workplace health and safety training; and

"Whereas the Conservative government is considering changes to the role of the joint health and safety commission and to the right to refuse unsafe work which could lead to even more workplace accidents in the future; and

"Whereas deregulating workplace health and safety will lead to more deaths and injuries;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to demand a coroner's inquest into the fatal accident at Dofasco, along with a complete investigation including full participation by the representatives of the workers."

I add my name to theirs.

1450

#### PRESCRIPTION DRUGS

**Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Simcoe Centre):** I'm presenting a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario signed by approximately 25 people who are associated with the resident care committee of Leisureworld Nursing Home in Barrie. The petition reads:

"We do not agree that residents of a long-term-care facility should have to pay part of their prescription costs, especially if their income is below \$18,000 per year, and ask the Legislature to consider eliminating this prescription copayment for residents of long-term-care facilities with an income of less than \$18,000 a year."

#### RENT REGULATION

**Mr Alvin Curling (Scarborough North):** I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Bill 96, the Tenant Protection Act, will dismantle all tenant protection legislation in the province of Ontario; and

"Whereas Bill 96 will lift rent control in Ontario, leaving Ontario's 3.3 million tenants with uncontrollable rent increases and financial instability; and

"Whereas the Progressive Conservative government is giving landlords the freedom to demolish apartment buildings and convert apartments into condominiums;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to withdraw Bill 96 and save rent control."

#### OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

**Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre):** "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Harris government has begun a process to open the Occupational Health and Safety Act of Ontario; and



"Whereas this act is the single most important piece of legislation for working people since it is designed to protect our lives, safety and health while at work and allow us to return home to our families in the same condition in which we left; and

"Whereas the government has made it clear that they intend to water down the act and weaken the rights of workers under the law, including the right to know, the right to participate and especially the right to refuse unsafe work; and

"Whereas this government has already watered down proper training of certified committee members;

"Therefore, we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario not to alter the Occupational Health and Safety Act or erode the rights of workers any further and ensure strict enforcement of the legislation."

I add my name to theirs in support.

#### BEAR HUNTING

**Mrs Lillian Ross (Hamilton West):** I have a petition to the Parliament of Ontario:

"Whereas bears are hunted in the spring after they have come out of hibernation; and

"Whereas about 30% of the bears killed in the spring are female, some with cubs; and

"Whereas 80% of the orphaned cubs do not survive the first year; and

"Whereas 95.3% of bears killed by non-resident hunters and 54% killed by resident hunters are killed over bait; and

"Whereas Ontario still allows the limited use of dogs in bear hunting; and

"Whereas bears are the only large mammals hunted in the spring; and

"Whereas bears are the only mammals that are hunted over bait; and

"Whereas there are only six states in the United States which still allow a spring hunt;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to amend the Game and Fish Act to prohibit the hunting of bears in the spring and to prohibit the use of baiting and dogs in all bear hunting activities."

#### EDUCATION REFORM

**Mr Tony Ruprecht (Parkdale):** I have a petition to the assembly and specifically to the Minister of Education and Training:

"We believe that the heart of education in our province is the relationship between student and teacher and that this human relation dimension should be maintained and extended in any proposed reform. As Minister of Education and Training, you should know how strongly we oppose many of the secondary school reform recommendations being proposed by your ministry and government.

"We recognize and support the need to review secondary education in Ontario. The proposal for reform as put forward by your ministry, however, is substantially flawed in several key areas: (a) reduced instruction time, (b) reduction of instruction in English, (c) reduction of qualified teaching personnel, (d) academic work experience credit not linked to educational curriculum, (e) devaluation of formal education.

"We therefore strongly urge your ministry to delay the implementation of secondary school reform so that all interested stakeholders — parents, students, school councils, trustees and teachers — are able to participate in a more meaningful consultation process which will help ensure that a high quality of publicly funded education is provided."

I have affixed my signature to this document because I agree with it.

#### OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

**Ms Shelley Martel (Sudbury East):** I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It reads as follows:

"Whereas it is vital that occupational health and safety services provided to workers be conducted by organizations in which workers have faith; and

"Whereas the Workers' Health and Safety Centre and the occupational health clinics for Ontario workers have provided such services on behalf of workers for many years; and

"Whereas the centre and clinics have made a significant contribution to improvements in workplace health and safety and the reduction of injuries, illnesses and death caused by work;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to oppose any attempt to erode the structure, services or funding of the Workers' Health and Safety Centre and the occupational health clinics for Ontario workers.

"Further, we, the undersigned, demand that the education and training of Ontario workers continue in its present form through the Workers' Health and Safety Centre and that professional and technical expertise and advice continue to be provided through the occupational health clinics for Ontario workers."

This is signed by 18 residents of the city of Welland. I agree with the petitioners and I have affixed my signature to it.

#### BOROUGH OF EAST YORK

**Mr John L. Parker (York East):** I have a petition here signed by a number of East York residents, including Beryl Corneil, John Ridout and Jack Christie. It reads as follows:

"We, the undersigned residents of East York, are in favour of the borough of East York remaining as a separate municipality."

#### NORTH YORK BRANSON HOSPITAL

**Mr Monte Kwinter (Wilson Heights):** I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the final report of the Metropolitan Toronto District Health Council hospital restructuring committee has recommended that North York Branson Hospital merge with York-Finch hospital; and

"Whereas this recommendation will remove emergency and inpatient services currently provided by North York Branson Hospital, which will seriously jeopardize medical care and the quality of health for the growing population



which the hospital serves, many being elderly people who in numerous cases require treatment for life-threatening medical conditions;

"We petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reject the recommendation contained within the final report of the Metropolitan Toronto District Health Council hospital restructuring committee as it pertains to North York Branson Hospital, so that it retains, at minimum, emergency and inpatient services."

I have affixed my signature.

#### OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

**Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold):** I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It reads:

"Whereas the Harris government has begun a process to open the Occupational Health and Safety Act of Ontario; and

"Whereas the Harris government has launched an all-out attack on working women and men that will expose them to dangerous and hazardous working conditions; and

"Whereas the Harris government is going to be responsible for the inevitable death and injury that will be caused to workers in these unsafe workplaces created by the Harris government's policies; and

"Whereas the Harris government shows nothing but disdain for the working people of the province of Ontario; and

"Whereas this act, the Occupational Health and Safety Act of Ontario, is the single most important piece of legislation for working people since it is designed to protect our lives, safety and health while we are at work and is designed to allow us to return home to our families hopefully in the same condition that we left; and

"Whereas the government has made it clear that it intends in its hamfisted and right-wing manner to water down the act and weaken the rights of workers under the law, including the right to know, the right to participate and especially the right to refuse; and

"Whereas this government has already watered down proper training of certified committee members;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario not to alter the Occupational Health and Safety Act or erode the rights of workers any further and ensure strict enforcement of the legislation."

It's signed by David Leblanc of Thorold, by V. Vaillancourt of Hamilton, by Chris Pizzacalla of Front Street down in Thorold, and many, many other working people concerned about the health and safety of workers here in Ontario and the damage that this government has done and will continue to do to them.

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#### HEALTH INSURANCE

**Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Simcoe Centre):** I have a petition which is not in the proper format addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, but I'll read it anyway. It is regarding medicare and it bears the signatures of 13 of my constituents, all of whom are senior citizens. They are concerned with the fairness of having

to pay for extra accident and sickness insurance coverage when they vacation outside the country.

#### CLASS SIZE

**Mr Michael Gravelle (Port Arthur):** I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the private member's bill introduced by Rick Bartolucci, MPP for the riding of Sudbury, limits the number of pupils that may be enrolled in a class in a school in Ontario; and

"Whereas this limit depends on the grade level of the class; and

"Whereas studies have concluded that there are clear benefits from smaller class sizes; and

"Whereas there is greater student involvement and interaction; and

"Whereas there is improved student performance; and

"Whereas there is the opportunity for greater individualization; and

"Whereas smaller class sizes allow for a more varied and constructive education for students;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support this private member's bill as it enhances classroom education."

I am very proud to sign my name to this petition.

#### RÉGLEMENTATION DES LOYERS

**M. Gilles Bisson (Cochrane-Sud):** J'ai ici une pétition de beaucoup de résidents de la ville de Timmins. La pétition se lit comme suit :

«Attendu que le gouvernement conservateur de Mike Harris prévoit démanteler le système actuel de contrôle des loyers ;

«Attendu que Mike Harris et le Parti conservateur n'ont pas mentionné le démantèlement du contrôle des loyers durant la campagne électorale de 1995 ou dans leur document intitulé La Révolution du bon sens ;

«Attendu que de nombreux candidats conservateurs dans leurs circonscriptions avec de fortes concentrations de locataires ont fait campagne durant les élections de 1995 en promettant de protéger le système actuel de contrôle des loyers ;

«Attendu que le gouvernement a consulté des groupes d'intérêt représentant les propriétaires et les promoteurs, tout en éliminant le financement accordé aux organismes représentant les quelque 3,5 millions de locataires en Ontario ;

«Nous, soussignés, exhortons le premier ministre Mike Harris, Al Leach, ministre du Logement, et les députés de l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario à mettre fin à l'attaque contre les 3,5 millions de locataires dans la province de l'Ontario.»

Je signe cette pétition.

#### TVONTARIO

**Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin):** "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas TVOntario has been providing Ontarians of all ages with high-quality educational programs and services delivered through television and other media for 25 years;



"Whereas TVOntario provides universal access to educational broadcasting in the most effective way possible;

"Whereas TVOntario provides essential broadcast services to communities in northern Ontario;

"Whereas TVOntario has an extensive community-based advisory network spanning the province;

"Whereas TVOntario is committed to increasing net self-generated revenues by 15% every year;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To formally commit to the province's continued support of TVOntario as a publicly owned educational network."

This petition is signed by people from Elliot Lake, Blind River, Iron Bridge and other North Shore communities.

### OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

**Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold):** I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. The young page Sandeep from York South will be delivering it to the table, sir. It reads:

"Whereas it is vital that occupational health and safety services provided to workers be conducted by organizations in which workers have faith; and

"Whereas the Workers' Health and Safety Centre and the occupational health clinics for Ontario workers have provided such services on behalf of workers for many years; and

"Whereas the centre and clinics have made a significant contribution to improvements in workplace health and safety and the reduction of injuries, illnesses and death caused in the workplace;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to oppose any attempt to erode the structure, services or funding of the Workers' Health and Safety Centre and the occupational health clinics for Ontario workers.

"Further, we, the undersigned, demand that education and training of Ontario workers continue in its present form through the Workers' Health and Safety Centre and that professional and technical expertise and advice continue to be provided through the occupational health clinics for Ontario workers."

It's signed by David Ferguson of Pine Street in Thorold, by Edward Lawrence of Keefer Road, and by numerous other hardworking people of Niagara region. I give this now to Sandeep from York South to deliver to the Clerk.

### ORDERS OF THE DAY

#### FEWER SCHOOL BOARDS ACT, 1997

#### LOI DE 1997 RÉDUISANT

#### LE NOMBRE DE CONSEILS SCOLAIRES

Resuming the adjourned debate on the motion for second reading of Bill 104, An Act to improve the accountability, effectiveness and quality of Ontario's

school system by permitting a reduction in the number of school boards, establishing an Education Improvement Commission to oversee the transition to the new system, providing for certain matters related to elections in 1997 and making other improvements to the Education Act and the Municipal Elections Act, 1996 / *Projet de loi 104, Loi visant à accroître l'obligation de rendre compte, l'efficacité et la qualité du système scolaire ontarien en permettant la réduction du nombre des conseils scolaires, en créant la Commission d'amélioration de l'éducation, chargée d'encadrer la transition vers le nouveau système, en prévoyant certaines questions liées aux élections de 1997 et en apportant d'autres améliorations à la Loi sur l'éducation et à la Loi de 1996 sur les élections municipales.*

**The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson):** I'm told the member for Halton Centre has the floor.

**Mr Terence H. Young (Halton Centre):** Through the Fewer School Boards Act, we are streamlining the structure of the system and focusing resources in the classroom, where they belong. According to A Report on School Board Spending, 1995 to 1996, some boards in Ontario devote up to 73% in the classroom, others as little as 51%, a 22% difference that adds up to millions and millions of dollars. The report found that on average, for every dollar spent in the classroom, more than 80 cents was spent outside the classroom. If we're going to give every student in this province an opportunity to excel, that discrepancy cannot continue. We're taking steps to ensure that non-classroom spending is minimized in order to maximize the resources focused on the classroom.

The Fewer School Boards Act will streamline administrative overhead by cutting the number of major school boards in Ontario in half, from 129 to 66, and replacing them with new district school boards, effective January 1, 1998. The district boards will follow, where possible, municipal boundaries. We will be retaining the small isolate and hospital boards as school authorities.

When this legislation takes effect, the province will have 55 English-language school boards, down from 125, and 11 French-language school boards, which will replace the confusing array of 71 existing boards, sections of boards and advisory committees. These changes will respect all constitutional rights and they will respect the tradition of local control and local decision-making.

Since school boards will no longer be in the taxation business and trustees will be restored to their traditional and appropriate role as guardians of local education, this legislation provides the mechanism through which the number of politicians at major school boards will be cut from almost 1,900 to approximately 700. School boards will have between five and 12 trustees, except Metro Toronto, which, due to its size, will have 22 trustees. The number and geographic distribution of trustees for individual boards will be based on student population and density tables that we will set out in regulation.

The government is also clarifying the criteria for who is eligible to serve as a trustee. Elected trustees should be full participants in all decisions. They should not have to withdraw from debates due to recurrent conflicts of interest. Through this legislation, school board employees



and their spouses will no longer be able to serve as a trustee in any school board or school authority in Ontario. Running for office will be permitted only if the employee takes a leave of absence. In addition, trustees will no longer be able to take home the equivalent of a full-time salary, some more than \$49,000 a year. Instead, school boards will have the option to provide an honorarium of up to \$5,000.

The trustees' role now will be to provide policy direction and support, not to be micromanagers in the schools. By clarifying that role, we are allowing teachers and principals to once again take responsibility for the operation of their schools.

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Finally, to make sure that these reforms take place in an organized and careful way, the government is establishing the Education Improvement Commission, which will work with the local community, including trustees, classroom teachers and parents, to guide the process of change.

Just before I finish, I'd like to comment on the media coverage that surrounded the minister's announcement. I am heartened by the number of trustees who stated unequivocally that they became trustees because they believed in the value of education. I can also understand the questions that were raised by trustees and others, because change is never easy.

I can assure you those questions will be answered in committee debates and as the commission begins its work. What I can't understand are the comments I read from a small minority of people who seem to suggest the education system in its current form is somehow above change and reform. The reforms this government is making are based on extensive consultation with the people of this province. The issues have been studied again and again in 24 separate reviews on finance and governance since 1950, including royal commissions, committees, fact-finding reports, panels and innumerable meetings. After every review there have been calls for changes to improve the way the system operates. Governments of all political stripes in other provinces have already responded by introducing similar changes. That leads me to some of the most telling comments that I read last week.

A number of trustees from those other jurisdictions who have already embarked on similar system-wide reforms and are already noting positive results, such as dramatic improvements in student performance on international tests — their advice to us in Ontario is to move ahead with the reforms and keep our attention focused on the classroom. That captures the essence of what this government is doing. We are showing leadership in finally tackling in a comprehensive way the problems with the education status quo and we are doing it in a way that demonstrates both responsibility and accountability to the students and teachers, to parents and to the taxpayers of Ontario.

In the final analysis, we are delivering on our promise of providing our students with an education that is second to none.

**The Acting Speaker:** Questions and comments? Further debate.

**Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines):** I do not feel a good feeling about having to speak on this bill, because I happen to think that the purpose of this bill is really to wrestle control from local people in education and give it to a central bureaucracy and that the ultimate goal of the Minister of Education and the Premier is to take money out of the education system, and that means taking it out of the classroom at this time.

There have been efforts already made in years gone by to control expenditures in various fields. Indeed, Premier Rae — I was reading his book — lamented the fact that he had to become involved in some control of expenditures in education by means of implementing the social contract, which affected the collective agreements of people in education, and had to hold down the potential increases that might have existed in education, so this is not a new effort. You will make the point that you're simply following on the policy of the last government. While the last government, in the midst of a very deep recession, undertook some of these activities, the zeal with which you are moving into a system that has had the fat removed from it, if you will, if there was fat in that system, is going to have an effect on what is happening in the classroom.

I always give you credit over there for your public relations in terms of the way you spin your message. While you want to talk about things in a simplistic manner and say to people, "Doesn't it mean an improvement if we have fewer politicians, and aren't the politicians the real problem out there?" you have to look at what the alternative is to elected representatives. The alternative is that bureaucracy then rules or the corporate sector takes over an increasing responsibility in our province.

When I think of people such as Bob Welch, Tom Wells, Bette Stephenson and others, Larry Grossman as well, who held the education portfolio in the past with a Conservative stripe on their back, as part of a Conservative government, I believe many of these people would be appalled at what you're doing to the education system, particularly Premier Davis himself. In education, a lot of people supported the Conservatives in the 1960s and the 1970s, based on Premier Robarts's premiership and Education Minister Bill Davis implementing a policy for the province.

Subsequent to that, Premier Davis, with various ministers of education, built an education system which would try to serve all the people in our province. There are what are called the regular classroom students who may not require additional assistance or help, but there are many people now who are part of the regular classroom who have disabilities. When they are placed in a regular classroom, it means there's a necessity for teacher aides to help out with the special needs of those individuals, whether they happen to be physically disabled or developmentally disabled. What we're going to see as a result of the constant squeeze on the funding in education is that these people will fall by the wayside.

Already this government has made a decision that it will not fund junior kindergarten, and the consequence of that can be seen later on in life as opposed to immediately. There are far more children today, whether we like it



or not, than there were a generation ago who come to the education system from dysfunctional families or disadvantaged families. As a result, the earlier the intervention to assist these youngsters, the better it is. Even people who in years gone by were opposed to junior kindergarten, who characterized it as an expensive babysitting service, have come around to the view that it is an extremely important investment in the future of our province.

Studies internationally, not simply in our own country but internationally, have demonstrated that the funding of junior kindergarten has a measurable effect on our future society by bringing about a situation where you have fewer people in the penal system, fewer people requiring social service payments and fewer people being, if I may use the terminology, disruptive to society. This government does not consider that to be important and I believe has already removed the funding for that in our education system.

You will have this resonate well with some people out there. There is a group of people who are anti-public sector, who are anti-education in terms of the education establishment, as they would call it, and they will applaud you for what you're doing. But I point out that you're dealing with the future of the province. You're dealing with vulnerable children in many cases, and as they get into secondary and post-secondary education, you're dealing with people who are going to be the future professionals or future workers in some other area in our province. I ask you not to shortchange those people.

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We have heard government speakers get up and give the government line. I understand that and I think in democracy all sides must be heard. I am not a person who immediately dismisses what everybody else has to say, but I am fearful that what you are doing in the education system is going to be detrimental. I know you made the promise that you would not cut funding to classroom education. So you have the Minister of Education get up and start to define in a rather narrow and interesting way what is classroom education, excluding, I believe, such things as library services and other services that are really a part of the classroom education when you think of it.

You as well are worrying people out there that you're going to privatize the system. There are thousands of workers out there in the public sector who have given dedicated service to the field of education, who have worked very hard, who are extremely committed, who are in jeopardy now of losing their jobs. That ultimately has a bad spinoff in our communities.

I've talked to people now who are school secretaries, who are working at the board of education in various capacities, who believe that what you're going to do is privatize the system, that you're going to contract out those services and that people who have had long-time employment are going to be left behind. This again does not bode well for our communities.

I know some people on the government side believe that when you get rid of public sector jobs, somehow you've done something good for the economy. We don't want public sector jobs just for the sake of public sector

jobs. I wouldn't suggest that; I don't think anybody, in fairness, would suggest that. But we're saying there are many positions that are essential to an education system, even those outside the classroom, and that cuts have already been made in the field of education.

The government of Ontario has said that the \$400-million cut introduced last year to school boards wouldn't hurt classrooms. Well, we've seen plenty of evidence that it has had an effect on classrooms. To date the government cuts to education have meant larger classes, more portables, less support for students and reduced access to essential learning resources such as libraries and textbooks.

This bill will now allow private companies into our schools, with the outsourcing of services. This is the first step, in our view, to the privatization of our schools. For that reason alone we must question the hidden agenda of education of this particular Minister of Education.

The government insists that amalgamation will save money despite the findings of a report they commissioned that clearly states that there is no evidence suggesting that amalgamation will save money. That's a report on school board spending by Ernst and Young.

You have the advantage of sounding plausible. You have the advantage of making a simple point to the people, as you do through your television ads. I see that the Premier now is on television speaking supposedly from the classroom. The people of this province who are watching this afternoon should know that they have to reach into their wallet every time the Premier comes on television on one of those ads because they are paying for those ads. In fact the Conservative government is spending, in the last couple of months in this program, more money than it spent in the entire election campaign. The entire advertising budget of the Conservative Party in the last election campaign is less than what you're spending today on government advertising.

Now I see that you're going out into other areas: The Premier is going to spend \$50 million on more ads. Coincidentally some of those ads might just be watched by people of Ontario if they're tuning into United States stations or if they're on airplanes and are travelling on Air Canada, Canadian Airlines and other airlines. They will get to see those. So the spinoff effect is, of course, positive for the Premier and the government.

The people who were out in Grimsby last night, over 6,000 strong, the people who were out in Port Colborne, over 2,000 strong, and Fort Erie, over 3,000 strong, would prefer to see that money spent on their hospital system, not on advertising by this government.

I think it's absolutely scandalous that you are paying for, out of the taxpayers' money, ads through the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, the Ministry of Education and Training, and later the Ministry of Health, which are simply self-serving, partisan propaganda ads featuring the Premier of this province.

The news media should be outraged by this. The news media, which see this happening and see the effect that it can have on the debate, should be outraged by this. I think some of them recognize that, but let's remember, the owners of the networks themselves are going to be financial beneficiaries of this.



We have another problem that we confront in dealing with issues of the day, because I think it's important to have equal advantage for opposition and government. I don't deny the government the opportunity to make its case when it goes out into the interviews in the hallways, when it goes on television on free-time broadcasts or when it subjects itself to interviews. Those are fine. That's equal. The opposition can do the same and the people can make their choice. That's the way it should be in our democratic system. But you are bringing about a very unfair advantage to one point of view, and you're doing it with simplistic and simple television ads.

The person watching the hockey game, who may have watched a bit of the 6 o'clock news, wonders: "What is all this that's happening out there? It sounds complicated. Yes, I know my local municipal politicians, whom the Premier calls whiners, are complaining and saying the property taxes are going to increase as the government dumps more responsibilities on local taxpayers, and he refers to them as whiners when they say it."

So they see that out there and they wonder what is going on. Then they turn on the television set and they see Mike Harris, and in a very simplistic message he reassures them: "Well, here's some wires and they're all mixed up. We're going to straighten them out."

Second, he turns around and says in the classroom, "Look, we're going to fix the education system."

Now if the ads in education or in health said it is wise for young people to get a shot, a vaccination for measles, that's quite legitimate. If it is advertising tenders for the government, that's quite legitimate. There are a lot of things that government does that are quite legitimate, such as when they advertise that a committee hearing is taking place in the Legislature and you're welcome to make submissions. All of that is acceptable, so please don't get the idea that I think or anybody else thinks there aren't areas where governments should invest funds for the purpose of informing.

The difference is these are self-serving, clearly partisan propaganda ads being paid for by all the people in the province, so when they see Mike Harris on television in one of those ads, they should know that they are paying for it — and we're seeing those now in education as well.

What it does is cloud the issues. There are some interesting issues to debate. In fairness, the government has an opportunity to make its case, and it may be that in some instances the case the government makes will be accepted by the population and will be valid. That's fine. There's nothing wrong with that, but you simplify it to such an extent that you eliminate that kind of debate. That debate doesn't take place.

If there's a good, solid debate in this House or on a public platform that deals with the actual issues and you win, well, good for you. That's democracy, and I applaud you for that. That happens from time to time. The opposition isn't always going to be accepted in its viewpoint by the public. But when you simply use these self-serving, blatantly partisan ads to simplify the issues so much that you really don't deal with them seriously, I think democracy loses in that case.

If you can win legitimately, that's fine. I accept that. In each election we all accept the fact that there is a

result. When John Turner lost the federal election in 1984 and they interviewed him after and they said, "What is your reaction to this?" he said, "The people have spoken, and in a democracy the people are always right."

The reason for that is that we go by numbers and if sufficient people vote for a particular party and elect that government, then that's the way democracy works. I respect that; I respect those results.

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But what I don't respect is the oversimplification of these issues. For instance, if you go to people and say, "If you go to a combined school board, you're going to save money because you'll have one administration and you'll have one this and one that," it sounds reasonable and it sounds plausible, and in fact there may be instances where that might actually be the case. But what you're saying is: "We want to show people that we're going to have fewer politicians and fewer administrators and so on, so we're going to do this right across the province regardless of the consequences." What you do is you save either no money or a minuscule amount of money and you take the decision-making away from the local people.

Let me tell you what the Conservative Party used to stand for. If somebody asked, "What does the Conservative Party stand for in this province?" — again I'll go to the Robarts days, the Davis days — they stood for local input and local government. That's what they stood for in those days. I could always say that of them. They could accuse the other parties, in fact, of being a little bit of centralizers in those days. I think the one thing they had going for them, if they had nothing else, was that attachment to local community. When Premier Davis established the education system as it is, he allowed for the kind of local input that's going to disappear with this.

Sure, you'll have fewer trustees, and the people from certain groups will write in and say, "Hurray for the government; we've got fewer politicians," and you'll save a few thousand dollars. But what you will lose is the ability of people to have direct access in a meaningful way, through elected representatives, to the education system.

Now we have county boards; we currently have county boards. At least now the town of Grimsby has representation on the Lincoln County Board of Education, and Niagara-on-the-Lake and Lincoln and St Catharines itself and West Lincoln. You have that kind of representation. It's going to disappear because there are going to be so few people on the board of education. As I say, the Reformers out there, the Reform Party, will applaud you. There will be so few people that those communities won't have that access to education. Coming from a large city, perhaps I should cheer that. Perhaps our city can predominate; perhaps we can get our way. But it's not fair to the people in the other area.

While you're listening to the applause from those who think, automatically, that if you have fewer representatives elected you're better off, you should know that you're removing that kind of direct access to elected people, because they are elected and they are accountable. If I don't like what they do, at the end of their term of office I can vote for someone else. If I like what they do, I send them back. But at least I know I have people that I can talk to on these boards of education.



All I'm asking, which I don't see in this bill, is that you don't just do it ideologically because it sounds good to say there are fewer politicians or fewer school boards so it's better. Really carefully look at it, and if there is a substantial saving without the loss of local autonomy somewhere, you're quite welcome to move there. I think you would have a pretty good consensus of support. But when you just holus-bolus across the province, because you've got a right-wing Minister of Education and a right-wing Premier and, worse, right-wing people who aren't even elected writing your policies and making that case, I think that's extremely unfortunate that this happens.

I suspect there are some moderate members of the Conservative Party, even some who are in the House today, who in their heart of hearts believe what I'm saying and know that what I'm saying rings true, even some who have worked for previous Conservative members and who are Conservatives with compassion, who are true commonsense Conservatives; the best word, the "commonsense."

*Interjection.*

**Mr Bradley:** But now we have the Reform right-wingers like the member for Etobicoke-Humber, who sits there and barks right-wing epithets left and right, and others.

I look, for instance, at the Minister of Labour. The Minister of Labour is here this afternoon. She was the chair of I believe the Waterloo board of education. The word I heard when she was the chair and other governments were in power was that she did a good job. They said: "You know, Elizabeth Witmer is a Conservative, but she's a good person. She believes in the education system." And here she is today in the House, part of a rabidly right-wing government that I can't believe she supports in its education policy.

I remember my good friend, Dianne Cunningham, the member for London North, having her feet cut off at the ankles by the Premier one day. I think it speaks of what you people are all about today. She came to St Catharines as the education critic. She spoke to the Ontario Public School Teachers' Federation. In fact I introduced her that night — it was a non-partisan night — and I was very complimentary because I thought Dianne had a lot to contribute to education as an opposition critic. I happened to be a guest there the same night and I introduced her, and she gave a good speech. Not everybody agreed with everything she said, but she was moderate, she was reasonable, she was commonsense and she had a lot of empathy for the people who deliver education on the front line.

Unfortunately, the same day the Premier was in the city, but he wasn't speaking to the public school teachers' federation, he was speaking to the Rotary Club, and the message was far different for the Rotary Club than it was for these other people. Dianne Cunningham had the Conservative blueprint for education and she presented what she thought was the Conservative policy. I thought she was moderate and I thought she made a good case. I didn't necessarily agree with everything she said, but I thought she presented well for the Conservative Party that I knew. But that same day the Premier was there with

those little asides about "those people in education, those teachers" and all of this, and of course he got applause from certain people — not everybody in that group, but certain people — who don't like people in the public sector, who think that people in the public sector are useless to our society.

Dianne Cunningham, the member for London North, represented that day the Conservative Party I know and have respected; though I've been in opposition to it, I have respected it. But Premier Harris, as leader of the Conservative Party, represented the new, rabidly right-wing Reform Party and its attitude.

That's what's reflected in this bill. It's not that everything you do in education is wrong. Some of it came from some commissions and some of it you have seen other governments involved in, so not everything you do is wrong. It's just that it's so vicious today and you're moving so rapidly and without looking at the ramifications of what you're doing.

I lament the fact that we have this legislation before us. I know there are people out there afraid now, people who have served for a long time. I know there are young teachers out there who are eager to work with young people. It's a challenge, I'll tell you, a lot tougher challenge today than it was before, because there are many more difficulties that the students experience today coming into the education system and it's a much more complex job to have. These people are eager out there to work in this system, to work with our young people, to make them productive and good people in our society as they come through our education system, to foster a positive self-image, to look to the future with some optimism. Instead we see a government that simply is going to slash wildly.

While you've taken the education system off the local property tax — by the way, that's something that's going to be pretty stable, if not declining because of declining enrolment, and you've dumped on to the municipalities areas that are either uncertain or that are bound to cost a lot more money. Then the Premier, when the local people complain, calls them whiners. I think the people are not whiners when they complain locally; they are very legitimate in what they're saying.

This is all in the context of the hospitals, just as the 6,000 people in Grimsby, the 3,000 people in Fort Erie, the 2,000 in Port Colborne and the hundreds and thousands across the Niagara Peninsula are protesting over the loss of their hospitals because they know the Premier said, "I can guarantee I have no plans to close hospitals." They remember that. I asked the Premier that question this afternoon. I didn't need a supplementary. The Premier gave me the answer. He's not going to keep that promise, and he's not going to keep the promise not to adversely impact the classroom with these cuts either.

1540

Why are we doing it? For a tax cut. I know that's popular. Listen, if you ask people out there, "Would you like a tax cut?" most of them will say, "Yes, I'd love a tax cut." But if you said to them, "You're going to lose your hospitals and your education system in the classroom itself is going to be adversely impacted and you're going to lose a lot of service, and when you travel on the



road you're not going to have the same degree of service in winter maintenance and a number of other services," almost invariably those people will say, "In that case, I want you to spend the money efficiently, I want you to spend it effectively, but no, we don't need this tax cut," particularly where you're going to have to borrow \$5 billion a year and add to the debt, because you have interest on that, add to the debt to give a tax cut.

The very rich will like it, because they're going to get a lot of money; 60% of it is going to go to the very rich people in our province, so they may applaud, and they will be able to buy their services.

*Interjection.*

**Mr Bradley:** What the member for Etobicoke-Humber, who interjects, is really saying is that there should be one rule for the rich and the privileged and one rule for the rest. That's exactly what it's about it, you see, because rich and privileged people can buy themselves a good education. They can go to private schools, they can go to private hospitals, and if necessary they can go to the United States if they need the service. All those people out there don't mind this. They can take that tax cut and spend it as they see fit. The member from Rexdale smiles, because I think he knows in his heart of hearts that I'm right when I say that.

How is this debate to come about when you're running television ads at the taxpayers' expense, costing millions of dollars? How are we supposed to have a proper debate in this province when Conrad Black owns 58 of 104 major newspapers? He was here. He was here for the swearing-in of the Lieutenant Governor, the friend of the Conservative Party, Conrad Black. What is he doing in the various newspapers now? He's firing people out the door and putting right-wing ideologues in. They just hired two people at the Ottawa Citizen, I saw the other day. Here's the qualifications: One is 28 years old; previous experience, two years as a researcher for Mike Harris and, previous to that, the Fraser Institute. Then I saw another one come in: two years' previous experience with the Reform Party as a researcher and, previously, the Fraser Institute. Conrad Black and his friend Radler, his henchman who does all the work, they say: "Oh, we don't bother with that. We're just running the business end."

That's why we can't have a proper debate on the key issues of the day, because you are robbing the airwaves from the people and you have Conrad Black doing your bidding elsewhere.

This bill is bad policy and it should be defeated, and we intend to oppose it in our party.

**The Acting Speaker:** Comments and questions?

**Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South):** I enjoyed listening to the dissertation from the member for St Catharines. He always brings an interesting point of view to the debate.

What I was really pleased for him to speak about is what the real agenda is in what the Conservative government is doing here. Let's not kid ourselves. The province is taking over the financing of public education. Why are they doing that? Very simply, it's because they want to get their hands on the entire pie so that down the road they're able to make the fundamental changes to educa-

tion that they want to make in the province. If school boards were to control a certain portion of the funding and school boards were to have some political control over education, the province would have problems trying to make changes like introducing private charter schools in Ontario. The government would have problems in introducing a whole bunch of initiatives to privatize services within the school boards if they didn't control the schools entirely.

That's why the government is going out and saying, "We want to take over education and take over the financing." They are doing it because the Conservative ideologues around Mike Harris and his caucus are saying, "We want to take over education because we don't like our present system of public education." The government wants to change it so that it fits its view about what education should be: a good system of education partly funded by the public sector but offset by the private sector where rich kids can go, and another system for the rest of us. I'm not an alarmist in saying that is exactly where this government is going with public education.

The fact of the matter is that the Minister of Education and Training, upon being sworn into cabinet, said, "I want to create a crisis within education so that I can effect the kinds of changes I want to effect in the Ministry of Education so that it fits the Conservative ideological dream," which is a system that is publicly funded but augmented by the private sector so that they can run private charter schools so that kids with money get a good education and that kids who don't get a not very good education. I, as a New Democrat, won't stand for that.

**Mrs Elinor Caplan (Oriole):** One of the things my colleague the member for St Catharines pointed out in his very important remarks on this bill, which I think should be noted, is the unprecedented advertising campaign that the people of this province and, I understand now, internationally will be subjected to.

Never before in the history of this province has the Premier gone on television in ads paid for by the provincial government which are clearly partisan propaganda and which are clearly designed to lull the people of this province into a false sense of security. The ads, and I have seen them and I agree with my colleague, do not give anybody a real understanding of the policies this government is proposing, of what it is doing. The ads are simplistic and they run on the principle that if you keep it simple, people will respond and feel comfortable.

That runs contrary to all the things I believe in. I believe that part of participatory democracy and the democratic process requires that people have facts, that they have information and that they are given that information in a fair and impartial way so that they can be encouraged to participate in the debate and give consent to the government for its plans.

It is wrong. It is absolutely contrary to all the beliefs of encouraging individual citizens to participate in democratic debate when what you do is a deliberate attempt to lull people into believing that they have nothing to be concerned about.

I find the ads, which are being paid for by the people of this province, to be an offence to democracy and an



insult to the people of this province. I don't believe they will be fooled.

**Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre):** As usual the member for St Catharines speaks with great passion. I know how anxious he was to speak this afternoon. He wanted to get on the record on this issue and speak to Bill 104. He knows how strong the opposition is out in the province among teacher groups, among trustee groups and particularly among parent groups to what this government is doing with this bill.

It is extremely important, I think, for us to take heed of the concerns the member for St Catharines has raised because he is reflecting what most of us are hearing in our constituency offices from people who are there.

**Mr Peter L. Preston (Brant-Haldimand):** That's not a fact.

**Mrs Boyd:** There are those among the members of the opposition who claim that's not the case. I can assure the member for Brant-Haldimand that this is the case in my riding. The member for St Catharines is well aware that it's the case in his.

This is not an esoteric argument about cutting bureaucracy. What happens in Bill 104 is that the power of the remaining bureaucracy will be enormous, because the only information that so few trustees will be able to get will depend entirely on the willingness and ability of the bureaucrats to bring that information forward. Their ability to represent their constituents — the students, the parents, the community members — is greatly lessened because their numbers will be lessened and because the way they are going to be elected, given the kinds of limitations this bill puts on them, is definitely counter to the kind of representation that communities have had in the governance of education in the past.

The member for St Catharines has certainly brought a number of issues, including the issue of false advertising, to our attention this afternoon, and I commend him.

1550

**Mr John O'Toole (Durham East):** It's a pleasure today to respond to the member for St Catharines's comments on Bill 104. I was caught by his comments with respect to the member for Waterloo North, the Honourable Elizabeth Witmer, and the member for London North, the Honourable Dianne Cunningham. Indeed they were the co-chairs of the Blueprint for Learning, a document in which the then Conservative caucus examined education throughout Ontario. The report, I believe, formed a very important basis for many of the policies being brought in today.

I think the whole issue on education and the changes in education are not new in Ontario. In fact, the member who just resigned from the New Democratic Party, David Cooke, has a long history of knowing that education — and the correct changes. We want changes that are sensitive to the needs of students.

In my riding of Durham East I speak regularly with those who I believe are very good directors of education. The director of the Durham board, Grant Yeo, and the director of the Durham separate board, Grant Andrews, are working very hard, under very difficult circumstances, I might add, to make sure that quality education and our children's future are in the right hands. I think these are

difficult changes, but they're changes that are long overdue. Most people here who are sensitive to education don't blame any of this on the students, they don't blame it on teachers; the system just has become a little bit paralysed.

I want to mention Dick Malowney. He's another great director of education in Northumberland and Clarington, working through some very difficult challenges. They worked towards the amalgamation with the Peterborough board. I know they're going to do their very best, that they have the interests of students at heart. I have a great deal of trust that these changes are required, that they are difficult and that we have to work together. I don't think having confrontation helps students one bit. I look forward to supporting this bill.

**The Acting Speaker:** The member's time has expired. The member for St Catharines has two minutes to respond.

**Mr Bradley:** I appreciate the comments of each of the members. I like this exercise of being able to respond. I want to say to the member for London Centre that indeed she has pointed out one area that I talked about, and she was quite correct in saying that the real winner in this is the bureaucracy. You've got fewer politicians and you can go out and brag about that, but the bureaucracy will now run it, because the fewer elected representatives you have, the more you have to put the power in the hands of the bureaucracy. They'll feed the information to you.

**Mrs Boyd:** Both provincially and locally.

**Mr Bradley:** Both provincially and locally.

I say to the member for Durham East that I appreciate his reference to Elizabeth Witmer and Dianne Cunningham, as they were known in their previous incarnations. I somehow think that the present policy of the government doesn't quite reflect what they had in mind when they developed this particular document, because it has changed substantially. These are more moderate people. Some days people in the opposition may criticize them, but they're part of the more moderate wing of the Conservative Party, I might add.

My friend from Oriole mentioned that the advertising is a big issue, and it is. More and more I'm getting people out there saying, "Am I paying for those ads every time I see the Premier's face on television?" Unfortunately I have to tell them that they are.

Peter Preston, who is now the member for Brant-Haldimand, is from Grimsby. He would have known many of the people who were out at that meeting last night, over 6,000 strong, denouncing the government over hospital cuts. That was a made-in-Toronto report, not a made-in-Niagara report, because it took into account the \$44-million cut in hospital funding for the Niagara region.

I lament the extent of this bill. I don't say the government shouldn't look at all its policies, all the past policies. I think this bill has gone too far, too fast.

**The Acting Speaker:** Further debate.

**Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma):** I want to thank all members of the House for giving unanimous consent for our caucus to defer our leadoff. I want to take the opportunity now to present my remarks as critic for the New Democratic Party in this debate on Bill 104. I will



be speaking at length and taking the opportunity to use the 90 minutes provided under the rules for leadoff remarks on pieces of legislation as important as this.

I must say at the outset that I am not happy that we are debating this legislation today. The reason is that I believe we must have a commitment from this government that makes real the remarks made by the Minister of Education and Training in this Legislative Assembly in question period a week or two ago. That was during mega-week.

The minister made his announcement on a Monday, downtown at Enoch Turner, the first school to provide free education to people in Ontario. Subsequent to that he travelled to London and spoke to the chamber of commerce in London. I find it somewhat passing strange that if he wanted to talk about education, he would not be talking to parents or students or teachers or trustees, but rather he chose to speak to the chamber. But I'm sure the chamber is interested in education.

I was in London that same week, as a matter of fact, and I spoke to parents and students, teachers and trustees, as well as other members of the general public about education, and they spoke to me and gave me a lot of information about what's happening as a result of the cuts this government has made to grants in education.

At any rate, to get back to the minister, the minister said, in answer to a question from me about his remarks to the chamber of commerce in London, that the boundaries set out on the maps that were published at the time the minister made his announcement were not necessarily final. He had said to the chamber in London that there might be changes. I wanted him to confirm that, because obviously if there might be changes to the boundaries that are proposed in London, Middlesex, Oxford and Elgin, there might be changes to other boundaries set out in those maps. The minister did confirm that there could be changes.

That then means we are really going to have to have extensive hearings across Ontario, because I'm sure there are going to be many groups — parents, teachers, trustees, members of the public — that are going to say, "We're in favour of amalgamation of boards and the lowering of the total number of boards, but we don't necessarily agree with the exact boundaries you've proposed," or for that matter, "We don't agree with the proposal that this board be amalgamated with that board instead of some other board."

I suspect there may be some in Elgin county, for instance, who might say, "We're not necessarily in favour of being amalgamated with London and Middlesex and Oxford." I know there are some in London who will say, "We expected we might likely be amalgamated with Middlesex, but we didn't expect to be amalgamated with Oxford and Elgin." Obviously we're going to have to get out into Elgin county and London and Middlesex and Oxford to hear what the people have to say about these boundaries.

If that applies to that particular amalgamation, it's going to apply in every other one that is proposed under Bill 104. This is going to mean extensive hearings, yet at this point we do not have a commitment from the government that we will have those kinds of extensive

hearings. We don't really know how many weeks of hearings the government is going to propose. We have had some preliminary discussions, but they're only preliminary.

1600

I'll tell you quite frankly, Speaker, as I know you are finding this a very interesting presentation, that I and my caucus were prepared to disrupt the proceedings of the House today. That's one of the tools that members of the opposition, whether they be Conservative, Liberal or New Democrat, have found over the years they have to use in order to squeeze concessions from a majority government.

I know you won't remember, Speaker, because you weren't here, but I remember the then leader of the third party, the now Premier of the province, getting up and reading out the names of just about every lake, river and creek in Ontario into the record, for hours at a time. That was the member for Nipissing. I know why he did it. He did it because he was opposed to a piece of legislation that the government then, the New Democratic Party government, was bringing forward and he wanted to hold things up and he wanted to ensure that we as a government agreed to hearings on the particular piece of legislation.

The rules do not allow for that kind of idiotic approach any more, because we can't get up and read the names of every street in Ontario or every lake or river into the record. For instance, on Bill 104, we could not get up and read the names of every school in Ontario into the record as a way of stopping debate.

**Interjection:** Well, we can use points of order.

**Mr Wildman:** Points of order are quite in order, I point out. I heard a member from the other side saying, "Well, we can use points of order." It may be instructive to the members opposite to know that the only way anyone in this House can raise a point of order that is in fact a point of order is if something is out of order.

The members will know that for some reason known only to the government, this government has been very derelict in its responsibility in terms of answering written questions on the order paper. If they had answered the written questions on the order paper, then members of the opposition or anyone else in the Legislature would not be able to get up and raise a point of order because they hadn't answered the questions; they would have answered them. All the government has to do is answer the questions. Then we couldn't get up on points of order about it not answering the questions. In that particular regard, the government is the author of its own misfortune.

**Mrs Boyd:** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: The government is indeed the author of its own misfortune. There is no quorum in the House.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin):** Would you please check if there is a quorum in the House.

**Acting Clerk Assistant (Mr Todd Decker):** A quorum is not present, Speaker.

*The Deputy Speaker ordered the bells rung.*

**Acting Clerk Assistant:** A quorum is now present, Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The member for Algoma.

**Mr Wildman:** I'm indebted to my friend the member for London Centre for drawing this matter to the attention



of the Speaker, particularly because — I know it may be out of order, Speaker, but I hope you'll indulge me if I point out that neither the Minister of Education and Training nor either one of his two parliamentary assistants was in the House when the quorum call was made. One is now here.

**Mr Preston:** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I believe it's improper for a member to draw attention to anybody who is absent, and I would request that he retract that.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The member is right. The member for Algoma, you're an old pro.

**Mr Wildman:** That's right. I just wanted to point out that when it is in the interests of the government to raise points of order, they seem to do that —

**Mrs Boyd:** That's right, and no hesitation.

**Mr Wildman:** — and with no hesitation, so they shouldn't object to us raising points of order when it's in our interest to raise points of order.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The member for Algoma, let's continue the debate now. Let's make sure we continue the debate.

**Mr Wildman:** I guess that was just a lesson in the way things work around here, that if it's in your interest to call a point of order to the floor, then you do it, and you shouldn't object to us doing it when you give us the opportunity.

**Mr John L. Parker (York East):** How come there are so many empty seats behind you?

**Mrs Boyd:** It's not our job to keep quorum.

**Mr Wildman:** It's the government's responsibility to keep a quorum in the House. It has always been the government's responsibility to keep quorum.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order. The member for Algoma, speak to me.

**Mr Wildman:** Speaker, I know that you're aware that it's the government's responsibility to keep a quorum in the House.

As a matter of fact, as I was saying, we as a caucus were quite prepared to prevent this matter from coming before the House until we had a commitment from the government that there would be extensive hearings. There must be extensive hearings to deal with these matters raised by Bill 104. At this point, we have no commitment on hearings.

*Interjection.*

**Mr Wildman:** One of the members seems to think we do. I think he's referring to Bill 103, not Bill 104. We don't have any commitment on hearings in this House on this matter, and we should.

What does Bill 104 do? It proposes to make significant changes in the educational governance in Ontario as part of an overall restructuring of municipal governance. It is the most significant change in the way local authorities are chosen, elected, and the ways in which they carry out their responsibility that we've seen in Ontario in over 100 years. This is a very significant period in the history of this province.

I know members of the party supporting the government understand that. That's why it's called mega-week — not just because there was an announcement about the megacity in Toronto, but because there were a

significant number of announcements during that week that affect school boards and municipalities right across Ontario, that affect their relationship with their ratepayers, their relationship with the community and their relationship with the provincial government, and vice versa.

I want to make certain that everyone understands a couple of things. The New Democrats in Ontario are in favour of the removal of education from the residential property tax. That is something that not only we but other parties in the House have advocated for a long time. We are not opposed to that, but the problem we've got is that when we looked at this we saw that this was going to be an enormous cost at a time when there were serious difficulties in terms of the budget.

The reason we did not proceed is that we did not want to do what this government is prepared to do, and that is to transfer a number of other soft services from the provincial level — the cost and the responsibility for them — to the municipal level. This is not a savings for the residential property taxpayers. There will be a shortfall which will probably result in an increase in their taxation.

If the Minister of Municipal Affairs were in fact suggesting, in exchange for taking education off the property tax, hard services — such as some of the provincial roads that the government is talking about transferring, water and sewer, even policing, I suppose — that relate to property and property values, and that was it, then that would be something we would consider supporting. But on top of those transfers, this government is also proposing to transfer the cost of social assistance and in a completely unprecedented way the cost of health care — public health, ambulance services and extended care — to the property tax.

1610

This is unprecedented in Canada. It has never been suggested by anyone, to this point. While all sorts of people have advocated the removal of education from the property tax, not one that I'm aware of, before this particular government came up with this idea in the last couple of weeks, has proposed that public health and long-term care should be funded from the property tax.

This is a very neat trick; that's what it is. The government has taken education, which is very predictable in terms of costs and probably quite stable — it may actually go down a bit as we see declining enrolment — to the provincial responsibility and has transferred a very unpredictable cost, which is going to grow substantially over the next few years, to the municipalities, to the property taxpayers.

Social service costs are unpredictable. If there's an economic downturn, they will go up substantially. They're going down now, but we know there are cyclical downturns just about once every decade. There have been ever since the Second World War. If that happens, the economic situation will mean that there will be fewer jobs, that people will be out of work and that they will be dependent on social assistance. Those numbers will climb substantially, and the municipalities do not have the tax room that a provincial government has to meet that demand. The municipalities are dependent on the property tax.



With long-term care this is really insidious. What we see is that the population, the bulge in the population, is now in its late forties. Over the next 20 years a very large percentage of the population is going to be over 65. The cost of long-term care is going to climb exponentially. That is being transferred to the municipalities, to the property taxpayers. This is not a good deal for property taxpayers at all.

Education costs about \$5.4 billion on the property tax. Sometimes the minister and other ministers in the government say it's \$6.2 billion. I think they came up with that figure by guesstimating what it might be by the year 2000. Anyway, right now it costs \$5.4 billion. That's being removed from the property tax. When you add up all the other transfers to municipalities in exchange it isn't a wash, as the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing is wont to say; in fact there's a \$1-billion shortfall. About \$6.4 billion is being transferred to the property tax in exchange for removing \$5.4 billion.

This government is saddling property taxpayers with an enormous bill in the guise of a fair exchange. It won't become obvious for a couple of years, maybe not until after the turn of the century. It's perhaps not quite as obvious as what the government did with the farm tax rebate, in saddling rural municipalities with a \$170-million bill, because they've now said they will eliminate the farm tax rebate and just have farmers pay 25%, as they've always paid since it came in. Obviously the municipalities aren't going to get the other 75% and they're going to have to make it up someplace; a \$170-million bill being turned over to rural, residential and business taxpayers in rural municipalities.

My good friend the member for S-D-G & East Grenville had a hard time keeping a straight face when he made that announcement in the House. He winked at me and said, "Don't you wish you'd thought of this?" It's a pretty neat trick. I'm not sure rural municipalities and rural municipal leaders are going to be too happy about this, but then, this is all part of a piece.

Many people in Ontario are in favour of reducing the number of school boards. As a matter of fact, our government initiated the Sweeney report, appointed John Sweeney, a former Liberal cabinet minister and a former director of education in the Catholic school system, to study the situation and to come up with a proposal for reducing the number of school boards in Ontario. But this bill is part of this mega-week set of announcements that are going to transfer, as I said, the burden of taxes to the property tax in a way that no one could have anticipated and is also, apparently, going to take away local accountability at the same time, and local autonomy is also going to be affected.

What this Bill 104 is really about is taking control of the education system by the Ministry of Education and Training, taking complete control over funding and spending decisions and curriculum and taking it away from local authorities.

There was a time when the Progressive Conservative Party, as it used to be called in this province, used to tout local autonomy, local decision-making. I can remember the Honourable Darcy McKeough — we used to call him the Duke of Kent — used to get up here and make long

speeches about local autonomy and how we had to ensure that local communities had control of their own affairs, whether it be municipal services or education.

But what Bill 104 does is reverse that for education. It takes complete control to the minister. The minister has been quite frank about this. He has said one of the reasons the government is proceeding in this way is because boards of education did not follow his game plan.

In 1996, when the Minister of Education took \$400 million away from education, he said he didn't want boards to make up the difference of their losses in grants through property tax increases. He didn't make that some sort of edict, just said he didn't want them to do it. But he found that some boards — not all, but some boards — did increase their mill rates somewhat, not to make up the whole loss they had experienced in grants, but they did increase their mill rates somewhat. The Minister of Education and Training, the Honourable John Snobelen, has made it very clear that he was displeased with that, that it wasn't part of the program, and because boards couldn't be trusted not to raise taxes, he had to take the power they had to do that away from them. That's what Bill 104 is about. It's not me saying it; he said it himself.

This is a bill that is about power, about control. It is a bill that says the ministry must have complete control over every decision that really matters in education and that local trustees will really not have much say any more. They certainly won't have any say with regard to curriculum and they will have very little say when it comes to determining how the budgets are going to be arrived at and how the expenditures are going to be made.

This is a complete denial of what the Progressive Conservative Party used to stand for: local autonomy, local people getting together and electing their representatives to make their decisions locally. They'll still be able to elect trustees, but the trustees won't have any say. The minister has been quite clear about that. He wants to have more say for school councils; he doesn't want the trustees to have much say any more.

#### 1620

Because of this inequitable financial tradeoff with regard to the property tax, the offloading of social services and long-term care in particular to the property tax from the province, and the disregard in Bill 104 for democratic processes and principles, we are opposed to this legislation. It's part of a piece, part of a restructuring that is going to be rammed through by this government whether or not the people of the communities it affects are in favour. For those reasons, we're opposed to this.

The Minister of Education and Training attempts to justify this by saying it's going to save money. He points to the KPMG study that says it will save approximately \$150 million. That \$150 million is saved because there will be fewer trustees and there will be fewer administrators, approximately 1,700 administrators going down to 700 or 800.

I think we should bring a bit of a note of reality to this. Members of the assembly are aware that about \$13 billion in total is spent on education annually in Ontario. That includes what is now on the property tax, it includes



the grants from the ministry and it includes also the expenditures by the Metropolitan Toronto School Board and the Ottawa Board of Education that don't get grants.

What percentage is a \$150-million saving of \$13 billion? That's a lot of money, \$150 million, but what percentage is that of the total spent on education in Ontario? The arithmetic isn't difficult. It works out to about 1.15%. It can hardly be that the minister is saying he's doing this because it's going to save a lot of money. It's only going to save a little over 1%.

It's dangerous when you start talking about numbers when you're dealing with education, though, because if \$150 million is about 1.15%, how is it that the \$400 million that the minister took out of education grants last year is, as he says, only 1.8%? Well, of course we know that the \$400 million is not a 1.8% cut; it's much more than that. For some reason the minister continues to say it is only 1.8%, but it is much more than that.

Mr Peter Wright, a financial person from the Ministry of Education and Training, a civil servant, who doesn't make political arguments, answered the question quite directly on behalf of the minister in the Ministry of Education and Training estimates in the estimates committee. He said, "No, a \$400-million cut is about 5.5%," not 1.8%, as the minister and the Premier keep saying.

Bill 104 establishes new district school boards and a transition process without any provision for the new role for boards in relation to the management of schools, financial decision-making or other issues. It also tampers with the principle of representation by population on school boards that is currently enshrined in the Education Act. Under Bill 104, this will simply be dealt with by regulation; it's not in the bill.

I know there are a lot of rural people who are seeing their boards amalgamated with adjacent urban boards and who are worried about this. I'll give you an example in my own area. In Algoma district all of the boards, except for the Hornepayne board in the far north, are going to be amalgamated with the Sault Ste Marie board. Sault Ste Marie District Roman Catholic Separate School Board and all of the other separate school boards, the North Shore, Michipicoten, are going to be amalgamated. It covers an area of about 40,000 square miles, not a small area.

Recently, after the minister's announcement, the director of education for the Sault Ste Marie District Roman Catholic Separate School Board said that in this new board 85% of the students are from the city, so that means if you have seven trustees, at the most only one or two will be from outside the city. That's worrisome. What about the people in all of those communities across Algoma district? How are they going to be properly represented in discussions by the board? And I'm sure that's the case in counties across southern Ontario.

There will be people living in the urban area, there will be administrators, there will be trustees, there will be parents in the urban areas who will just assume, I think correctly, as I read 104, that they will have nearly all the trustees, and there will be large expanses of rural areas with schools, with students, who will not have trustees. This again is a denial of what the Progressive Conservative Party used to stand for.

I can remember debates in this place where members of the Conservative Party would get up and they would say, "We've got to preserve the role of rural Ontario, the rural communities in this province," but this is being denied by this government. It started with the changes to redistribution.

**Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener):** Yes, and the NDP used to be called the CCF too.

**Mr Wildman:** I agree that the NDP is no longer called the CCF, and this government party is no longer the Progressive Conservative Party. I think it would be more likely called Reform, or perhaps you could put an "ly" on the end of Progressive so it becomes the Progressively Conservative Party. But it certainly is not progressive and it certainly doesn't take into account the needs of rural Ontario. I represent a very large part of rural Ontario in the north and I'm proud to represent them, and I'll continue to put forward the needs of rural communities as we debate these kinds of legislation.

It's unfortunate that members of the governing party who represent rural Ontario are not also putting forward the needs of their communities.

**Mr Bert Johnson (Perth):** We are.

**Mr Wildman:** Well, if they are, they're not being listened to. They're not being listened to by the people who make the decisions on the front bench.

Also, this Bill 104 establishes the so-called Education Improvement Commission, which is empowered to —

*Interjection.*

**The Deputy Speaker:** Member for Kitchener, please.

**Mr Wildman:** I hear an urban member in the back here making some comments. He doesn't like the fact that the needs of rural Ontario are being put forward.

It would appear in this bill that the so-called Education Improvement Commission is going to be empowered to compel boards to contract out non-instructional services, compel outsourcing. Right there, that shows that there isn't local autonomy.

1630

Recently I was in Cobourg and I met with the chair of the Northumberland and Clarington Board of Education, certainly not a member of my party. He is a Progressive Conservative and he expressed serious concern about this provision of Bill 104. I don't think it's out of place to repeat what he said. He said it publicly; it was before the press and the public. He said that this government was the most vicious government he had ever seen in the history of Ontario, and he said that his board has done studies about outsourcing.

**Mr Preston:** What's his job?

**Mr Wildman:** He's the chair of the board, and he's a Conservative. He said that he had studied outsourcing, the ministry had studied outsourcing.

It's interesting that this government, every time they hear about somebody who disagrees with them —

*Interjection.*

**The Deputy Speaker:** The member for Sudbury East.

**Mr Wildman:** Every time members of this government hear from someone who disagrees with them, they attack them.

*Interjections.*

**Mr Wildman:** I don't care where the member from Simcoe is; I'd like to debate this bill.



The chair of the Northumberland and Clarington board said they had studied outsourcing because they were looking for ways to save funds. They came to the conclusion, after an extensive study, that it doesn't save money; it's going to cost them more money.

I want to emphasize that this gentleman did not raise objection to Bill 104 on the basis of the number of trustees or, in fact, the amalgamation. His board is being amalgamated with the Peterborough board, and frankly, they're in favour of it. So perhaps members opposite should not attack someone who is opposing them on certain things before understanding what their actual position is. This chair is not opposed to amalgamating his board with the Peterborough board. He isn't even concerned, as far as I can understand, about lowering the number of trustees.

He is opposed to this requirement that the Education Improvement Commission compel boards to contract out on non-instructional service. He says that is going to cost them money, and it makes sense: Maybe you'll change this section, I hope, but if you hire private sector contractors who are in business for a profit, which is why they're in business, they are going to charge you more than you can do it for in-house. That's why custodial services, secretarial services, accounting services, those kinds of things, for that board at least, are cheaper in-house.

Buried in the responsibilities of the Education Improvement Commission is a hidden agenda for this government. I believe it is the privatization of education in this province, and the first step is the outsourcing of non-instructional services. I believe we're moving towards a voucher system which will have each student costing a certain amount and that money then following that student no matter where that student goes to school. We will end up with public funds going into the private school system. An interim step will be charter schools, and then we're headed, I think, for the complete privatization not only of non-instructional services but also the teaching services that are provided by boards of education.

I also want to raise in this debate some concerns I have about the Education Improvement Commission's powers under this bill, which are quite extensive, powers over what the boards can do.

It might be suggested that it's unusual that New Democrats might be opposed to this legislation because, as I said earlier, we did initiate the Sweeney study on amalgamation of boards. I want to make quite clear that, as I said, we are not opposed to lowering the number of boards in Ontario as long as the needs of the local communities are met properly. I have some serious problems with the final report from Mr Sweeney, however. Initially, Mr Sweeney came forward with —

**Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I don't believe we have a quorum in the House.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Could you please count the number of members.

**Acting Clerk Assistant:** A quorum is not present, Speaker.

*The Deputy Speaker ordered the bells rung.*

**Acting Clerk Assistant:** A quorum is now present, Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The member for Algoma, you have the floor.

**Mr Wildman:** I'm pleased that so many members have rushed back in to hear my remarks.

I said I had some difficulties with the final report of Mr Sweeney. Initially, Mr Sweeney came forward with a report that would have reduced the number of boards by about 50%. Then the new government, the Conservative government, asked him to go back and look at some other matters, specifically how much money was spent outside of the classroom, to come up with a definition for classroom expenditures.

Mr Sweeney came back with a report that said 47% of all expenditures were spent outside the classroom, but what was problematic was his definition of what was classroom instruction. He did not include in "classroom instruction" junior kindergarten, adult education, teacher preparation, principals, vice-principals, all the support staff, custodial services. He didn't include the assistants who do things like give remedial help to students who need it. He didn't include special staff who give assistance like speech pathology, audiology, psychological assistance, all of those things. He included those as administrative. That's a false division. All of those services are provided to assist students to achieve. They are therefore classroom expenditures.

Some people might say, "Why do you include custodial services as part of that?" Obviously, custodians clean the schools. They keep the schools safe. They do repairs. That adds to the educational environment of the students. If we have a dirty school that is in disrepair, that affects the learning environment for students adversely. So I'm very concerned about that final report and I want to indicate clearly that we will not be supporting this legislation.

I'd like to deal in some specifics about the bill. Bill 104 introduces new definitions for district school boards, English public and separate and French public and separate, and school authorities, existing isolate boards and provincial schools.

I must say there's one thing I do agree with that this government has done in opposition to what Mr Sweeney proposed. This government, in deciding on amalgamation, has not included the isolate boards in the new amalgamated boards. They are keeping the isolate boards separate and are going to establish so-called school authorities. I agree that it would not have made any sense to include most of the isolate boards — maybe some of them — in the new amalgamated boards. As a result of the amalgamations proposed in the map the minister published when he made his announcement, school boards in northern Ontario are going to cover enormous geographic areas. If they had included the isolate boards as well, they would have been even larger and more unmanageable.

1640

As it is, the geographic areas that are being covered in northern Ontario are such that it's going to make it impossible for trustees who are elected under this new system, if the boundaries remain as they are proposed, to



attend meetings. One of the school boards that is proposed goes from Hornepayne all the way along Highway 11 to Timmins and down towards North Bay. It would take seven hours to drive one way from Hornepayne to where the board will probably have its meetings — seven hours one way.

**Mr O'Toole:** Why don't they just have it in the schools?

**Mr Wildman:** Then it would take seven hours for the people in the other area to travel to them.

*Interjections.*

**The Deputy Speaker:** There's a period after the speech which is called questions and comments. You could wait for that.

**Mr Wildman:** It appears that the member, who's from southern Ontario, is actually trying to learn about northern Ontario, so I appreciate the question. If it takes seven hours to drive from one community to the other, if he's suggesting that they have the meeting in that community, it will take seven hours for the people from the other community to drive there.

It has been suggested by the government that perhaps they could use teleconferencing so they wouldn't have to travel these long distances. The government, as I understand it, has been in touch with Bell Canada and asked them if they can provide the equipment to make teleconferencing for school board meetings possible across northern Ontario. I understand that Bell has said yes, that if the government is prepared to give them the money, to invest the money, in two years they could have all the boards covered with equipment that would allow for teleconferencing. So we're going to invest all this money, apparently, pay Bell Canada to install digital equipment and all the other equipment required for teleconferencing and within two years we will be able to have meetings where people will be looking at each other on television and talking to each other back and forth over long distances.

I'm not necessarily opposed to teleconferencing, but if the board is centred in Timmins and most of the students are from Timmins, won't most of the trustees be from Timmins? They will be at their meeting, and you might have one or two trustees from communities a long distance away, maybe Hearst or Kapuskasing, and they will be sitting there with their equipment, trying to intervene in the discussion among all the people in the meeting in Timmins, trying to put forward the concerns for the people from all the schools that are outside of Timmins, over that great expanse of territory.

Well, good luck. If we have a period of declining enrolment and there's a suggestion that perhaps some of the schools might close, you can bet in that kind of scenario they aren't going to close in Timmins. They're going to close in the outlying areas, in the outlying communities, and they'll bus people over long distances, or they may, because of the distances involved, not be able to bus them; they may have to board them in the city so they can attend school. So much for the concerns of the small communities.

This Bill 104 also sets limits on how many trustees a board can have and who will be eligible to run for office. The number being put forward is five to seven, except of

course in Toronto, which is going to have an enormous number of students and schools included in one board, and they will be allowed about 22 trustees.

Now, that's the point. If you only allow five to seven trustees on a board and these boards are covering enormous geographic expanses, most of the communities in that large geographic area are not going to have a trustee; they won't have any representation. Yet as I understood it, the Progressive Conservative Party in the past has been interested in preserving local communities, strengthening communities and ensuring that there is local autonomy and accountability in communities. Bill 104 doesn't allow for that. I hope the rural members opposite are putting forward these concerns in caucus.

The bill also establishes, as I've said, the Education Improvement Commission, so-called, which will oversee the amalgamation of the current boards of education. In other jurisdictions there have been amalgamations. I've heard the members of the government in the House refer to Alberta and also to British Columbia. In both of those jurisdictions there were far fewer boards in the first place, and of course when they eliminated boards and amalgamated boards there were far fewer boards being eliminated. In British Columbia, however, the process took three years. As I understand it, the result is something that most people can live with and are happy with, but they took three years to do it.

This government, because of its agenda, is determined that this will be in place by January 1, 1998 — a far greater number of boards involved, a far greater number of collective agreements that have to be dealt with, far more people, far more students, far more schools, seniority lists that are very complicated, trying to deal with assets and debts for various boards and working all that process out. This government wants to do all that in a matter of months, so the Education Improvement Commission has been given enormous powers under this bill.

**Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin):** Dave Cooke will look after it.

**Mr Wildman:** I hope he does. I hope Ann Vanstone does as well. Ann Vanstone is a Conservative who, just a week before the announcement was made that she and Dave Cooke were going to be appointed, was threatening to sue the government over this Bill 104.

**Mr Gerretsen:** Maybe that's why they appointed her.

**Mr Wildman:** She was the chair of the Toronto board and is very experienced and knows these matters, and so does Dave Cooke. I'm not concerned so much about who's there but what is being proposed by the government and why they are taking control. Why is it the government is taking control of education? It's because they want to take \$1 billion out of education. That's the reason. To be fair, the minister has been quite straight about that. He said that. I'm not critical of him; he's quite upfront about it. He wants to take \$1 billion out of education, \$1 billion on top of the \$400 million they took out in 1996. He said they won't take it out in 1997 but cuts will begin again in 1998.

1650

How are they going to do this? We're told that there are going to be changes in the funding formula for students in Ontario. We expect this announcement will be



made by the Minister of Education as part of this whole process sometime this month.

I understand also that the government may be interested in having some consultation about that change and may be going to get into some sort of process which will allow input from people across the province. I hope they will do that. But they want to have it in place before the end of June.

We also are told that many issues arising out of the work of the Education Improvement Commission will be dealt with in that bill, the bill that will bring in the new funding formula. The way it's going to work is that the Ministry of Education will determine what core educational services each student needs. They will then calculate how much it costs to provide those services. I'm not sure if they're going to do that on a province-wide basis or if they're going to do it regionally, but at any rate, they're going to come up with a figure. That will determine what the allocation is; simply by determining how many students a board has, that will determine how much money each board gets.

I suppose if a board in the future wants to provide services other than those core services, they may be able to do that, but they won't get any more money from the government; there won't be an additional allocation. They will have to take the money for those other services out of the basic allocation, so it means cutting other services.

It's something like the way the government treated junior kindergarten. The government said: "Junior kindergarten won't be funded at 100%. We're cutting the funding for junior kindergarten and we're making it optional for boards. If the boards want to provide junior kindergarten, they can, but they're not going to get the money." So what happened? Many boards that were not too much in favour of junior kindergarten said, "Okay, we're not going to provide it," and those that did want to continue junior kindergarten programs that they already had in place had to cut those programs and change them substantially. Many of the junior kindergarten programs changed from a half-day every day during the week to a full day every other day. In some cases, they were amalgamated with senior kindergarten programs. The number of students in each junior kindergarten went up substantially. The number of aides that junior kindergarten teachers had was cut substantially.

That's what's going to happen in this scenario, because the government is determined to take another \$1 billion out of education as part of this overall process.

There's another piece of legislation coming, and we don't know what it's going to say or when it's going to come; that is, changes to teacher collective bargaining in the province. If the government is taking nearly all the power and responsibility away from boards in terms of funding and expenditures, I suppose it's not surprising that it also intends to change teacher collective bargaining. We've heard musings from the minister and from some of the government backbenchers that maybe we should take the right to strike away from teachers and maybe we should even have province-wide bargaining, ignoring the fact that 97% of the contracts in the last 20 years have been negotiated without lockout or strike in

Ontario and the teachers and the boards have been able to settle their agreements amicably.

Let's deal specifically with some of these parts of Bill 104. All of part VIII of the Education Act is repealed under Bill 104. Part VIII of the Education Act deals with trustee representation. It determines the number of electors, rules for determination of the number of trustees and appeals to those rulings.

It's interesting that Bill 104 leaves part VII of the Education Act in place. It deals with board members' qualifications, resignations and vacancies. The bill also says who can run and that teachers or spouses of teachers cannot run for a board. But it leaves part VII of the Education Act in place, which seems rather strange to me because of the other changes. I think if this bill passes, it's rather redundant.

The bill introduces a new part XIV, which is the establishment of a district school board and related matters.

It allows for many things to be dealt with by regulation that are not included in the bill. This is always dangerous. All of us, whether we've served in opposition or in government, understand that it is quite dangerous to allow a government simply to say, "We'll deal with this by regulation," because it makes it possible then for all sorts of changes to be brought in without proper public scrutiny and proper public input. All it means is that the bureaucrats in the Ministry of Education will come up with some proposals, they will make them to the minister and the minister will consider them. If he agrees with them, he'll take them to the cabinet. It goes to the cabinet committee on legislation and regulations and gets passed, and that's it. There is a committee of the Legislature that deals with this but they don't really look at most of the regulations that are passed by cabinet. That is quite a problem.

Let's deal with the matters that are actually included in the bill. The bill establishes district school boards and sets out the boundaries and names and areas of jurisdiction. If the minister was serious in his comments in London and here in the House, then we obviously have to have hearings on this, and they have to be extensive hearings. If people have objections to the areas or boundaries for the district school boards, then we have to get out there and hear what they have to say so that we can make changes, because the minister said that the boundaries were not necessarily final and there could be changes.

Part XIV also sets out the number of members for each board and sets out the establishment of geographic areas for electoral purposes within the areas of jurisdiction of district boards; that is, wards. It suggests it might be wards. I suppose that wards and the setting up of wards might make it possible to ensure that there are going to be rural representatives on the board, but that depends on how the wards are established. If the wards include some parts of the urban areas as well as the rural areas, it is quite possible that the urban votes in the ward will swamp the rural votes.

It also sets out the distribution of board members to the geographic area. When we had the briefing on this legislation after the minister made his announcement, we



asked the members of the ministry staff what provision there was going to be to ensure that all communities were represented on a board. To our great surprise, the ministry staff said they hadn't thought of this, that it hadn't been considered. Of course it's a problem, because if you're going to limit the number of trustees to five or seven, it's impossible to ensure that all the communities are represented on the board. Why the ministry staff had not thought about that is beyond me, but apparently they hadn't.

I think this is one example of what happens when a government attempts to rush something through to get it decided very quickly, as they're doing with Bill 104. A lot of the implications and ramifications have not been properly considered and thought out.

1700

That section of Bill 104 also deals with "the duties to be performed by the" so-called "Education Improvement Commission...relating to representation on or elections to district...boards." Interestingly enough, the bill does not allow for the dissolution of existing boards. It states that there will be no regular elections in 1997 to existing boards. Again I say, what is the rush? If you want to do this properly, why not do it the way they did in British Columbia and take two or three years to do it and ensure that it's in place for the next municipal election, not the municipal election in 1997 but the subsequent municipal election? What's the hurry? Why not do it right?

There's a very simple answer to that: The government needs to do it this year because the minister has to gain complete control of education expenditures this year, not because of anything to do with education or educational governance in Ontario but because the Minister of Finance has a problem. The Minister of Finance requires \$3 billion to help pay for the tax scheme that will bring about cuts in income taxes for the top 10% of income earners in Ontario. They need \$3 billion. They're not going to take all \$3 billion out of education. They're going to split it up evenly in the three areas most costly to government. They are going to take a billion dollars out of health, they're going to take a billion dollars out of education and they're going to take a billion dollars out of other community services, particularly social assistance.

The minister has to have control over education expenditures this year so that by 1998 he will have control and will be able to take another billion dollars out of the education of our kids in their classrooms. That's the reason for the hurry. Otherwise it could be done in a thoughtful, serious way, looking at all the implications and ramifications and making changes where necessary to ensure that the needs of students are met right across Ontario in each one of these new boards.

But the government isn't concerned about the education of students. The government is concerned about taking a billion dollars away from their classrooms and away from their education. Nobody should be fooled that this government is preserving the education of students in classrooms and protecting educational expenditures in classrooms in Ontario. They've already hurt those educational experiences for students, and another billion

dollars removed from education will mean that students will lose big time in Ontario.

I must say that in terms of representation on these boards I am very concerned that determining how many trustees will be on each board is left to regulation. This is a denial of the principle of representation by population, where people will be able to have a say directly on how the representation on boards will be determined. Instead it appears that the Education Improvement Commission will make a recommendation of how the representation will be determined and that will be it.

Let's deal with the Education Improvement Commission. As I said, part XIV establishes this new commission. It will consist of five to seven appointed members. While there is no specified term in the bill, I understand that the bill will automatically be repealed on December 31 in the year 2000, so I guess the term of the commission runs until the end of the year 2000.

The commission is to report annually to the minister, and he must table a report in the Legislature. This commission has enormous powers. It will coordinate the process related to district school board or school authority elections. It will determine how the elections take place this coming fall. It will also identify issues and make recommendations related to the establishment of French-language district school boards.

One of the supportable things in this bill is the establishment of new French-language boards in Ontario. This is required because of the commitment to provide French services where numbers warrant in Ontario and because of the constitutional decisions upheld by the Supreme Court which say that the francophone community in Ontario must have control over the governance of their schools.

I'm more than a little worried about how these new French-language boards will operate, because the areas they cover, particularly in northern Ontario but right across the province, are even greater than the enormous boards that are being proposed for the English-language schools in Ontario.

The commission will also identify issues and make recommendations related to "the distribution of the assets and liabilities of existing boards and the transfer of staff." That is quite a mouthful. How on earth is this commission going to do this in such a short time?

Every board in Ontario has different collective agreements, from setting forward levels of pay to dealing with issues like seniority and positions of responsibility. If we amalgamate these boards and get these large new boards, a lot of different collective agreements are going to have to be merged. This is going to entail an enormous amount of negotiation, I guess between the commission and the unions representing the workers, the teachers, the support staff, in all the boards. This is going to take a lot of time if it involves negotiation. If it is done by some other method, then we could be headed for serious problems.

Just the decisions around how we share reserve funds — that is, if the government doesn't intend to somehow expropriate those reserve funds from boards — how we deal with reserve funds and how we meet the liabilities of existing boards that will now have to be taken on by the new boards is an enormous task.



It's unfortunate that this government is determined to get \$1 billion out of education in 1998 so that it has this in place by January 1, 1998. If that weren't the real agenda, then perhaps this could be done over a longer period of time in a more sensible way to ensure that these very difficult issues are dealt with in a serious, reasonable manner.

Most insidious in these powers of the Education Improvement Commission is the next one. The Education Improvement Commission must "consider, conduct research, facilitate discussion and make recommendations...on how to promote and facilitate the outsourcing of non-instructional services by district school boards." This suggests that boards may be subject to financial or other penalties if they don't agree to contract out.

What is going to happen if the chair of the Northumberland and Clarington board and his other board trustees say to the commission, "Well, we've studied outsourcing and we've found that it's going to cost our board more money, and therefore we don't want to do it"? Will the commission then impose sanctions on that board? Will the commission say that the board will lose, or will it require them to move forward even though they think it's going to cost them more money? What does this mean for the workers?

1710

We know what the Premier thinks it means for the workers. He made a statement to the press recently in which he said the only people who are going to lose in this are Sid Ryan and his members. He was of course referring to the members of the Canadian Union of Public Employees who are represented by that union in many boards across Ontario. There are 36,000 members of CUPE who work for boards of education in Ontario, 36,000 people who live in the communities across Ontario who provide custodial services, secretarial services, who act as teaching assistants to help students with special needs. What this means for those CUPE members, those 36,000 workers, is that they're going to lose their jobs. They're going to be out of work.

I don't think that can easily be absorbed even in a large metropolitan centre, but I certainly know that in small rural communities, if you have a significant number of people with good-paying jobs, who are providing a good service, laid off, it's going to affect them and their families but it's also going to affect the business community in that town.

They're not going to have money to spend at the retail stores. They're going to be dependent first on unemployment insurance, or as it's now euphemistically called, employment insurance, and then subsequently on welfare; or they're going to have to take much lower-paying jobs to do the same work they're already doing for contractors — unless this government provides for successor rights, and when we see the example of what they did with their own employees, OPSEU members, we know this government is not going to ensure successor rights.

What does it mean for the educational experience of the students? I can tell you there are a lot of parents in this province who are very worried about having people paid on a contract basis, at the minimum wage, carrying out the responsibilities of custodians in their schools. It's

a question of safety, because there's going to be an enormous turnover in those kinds of jobs. People are not going to stay in \$7- and \$8-an-hour jobs if they can find other employment. They're not going to have a long-term commitment to the school. They're not going to be the extra eyes that custodians are now for the principals and vice-principals. Parents aren't going to know who is in the school. That raises really serious questions about abuse, the possibility of abuse of students.

We know that in the public education system already, that is a concern we all have, now when we know who the staff are. If we don't know who they are and if they don't have a long-term commitment to the school and to the students, it's an even more serious question. It's a question of safety.

As I said, it appears that the Education Improvement Commission is empowered to compel boards to contract out non-instructional services, and that's only the first step. After that, we're headed to privatization of the whole system. Already I understand that the separate school board in Sault Ste Marie is considering laying off all its accounting staff and hiring a contract firm from Toronto to do its accounting. I don't know, they may think it's going to save them some money, but what does it mean for the community if we lay off all those people who have good-paying jobs and have been providing a service for the community over all these years? More unemployment.

**Mr O'Toole:** What's the answer?

**Mr Wildman:** The answer is to provide good, well-paying jobs to people who can provide a service, who can provide for education in Ontario. The answer is not to contract out. The answer is not to compel boards to fire their loyal employees.

The commission is also to "conduct research, facilitate discussion and make recommendations on strengthening the role of school councils." That may sound like a good thing, but I'm afraid this government may see it as a way of leading to charter schools under the euphemism of giving parents control over education. Charter schools are simply private schools at public expense.

The commission is also to "conduct research, facilitate discussion and make recommendations on the feasibility of increasing parental involvement in school governance," which, as I said, basically means charter schools.

The commission will also "make recommendations on what measures...to strengthen the financial accountability of existing boards." What does that mean in terms of power and role of local trustees? If the boards don't have control over the educational expenditures, if they no longer have the control over taxation, setting a tax rate, how do we ensure the financial accountability? What do they have financial control over? What are they accountable for?

The most serious concern I have about the Education Improvement Commission is its relationship with existing boards and the restriction on the power of existing boards, which is similar to the trusteeship that has been installed to control Metropolitan Toronto municipalities as they move towards the megacity.

Existing boards will not be able to buy or sell property with a value of more than \$50,000. They may not



appoint, hire or promote any person or make severance arrangements except in accordance with existing contracts and collective agreements without the approval in advance of the Education Improvement Commission. Boards must submit their 1997 budget to the commission for approval by a set date and the commission can make changes, if necessary, before giving approval.

These are freely elected, democratically elected members of boards, elected to make decisions on education for local communities by the electors in that community. We're not talking about situations where there's been malfeasance. We're not talking about situations where boards have squandered the taxpayers' money. We're talking about freely elected, democratically elected people being told they can't exercise their powers without the approval of an appointed board appointed by the minister. What does this mean about democracy? What does it say that the votes cast in the last municipal election for these people mean?

"The decisions of the Education Improvement Commission are final and shall not be reviewed or questioned in a court." There is no appeal.

I received a letter recently from a woman named Mrs Norma Inch from Etobicoke. She says in her letter that she's concerned about the powers given to the Education Improvement Commission under this Bill 104. She says:

"The draconian powers given to the Education Improvement Commission in this new bill are, at the very least, frightening. I refer particularly to subsections 344(1), (2) and (3), whereby the Regulations Act does not apply to them. Their decisions are final and not subject to review, and the Statutory Powers Procedure Act does not apply to them. Under "Vicarious liability," subsections 346(3) and (4), they are not subject to the Proceedings Against the Crown Act and are absolved of any responsibility for any neglect and/or default arising from their actions." As she points out, "Nobody is above the law."

Why is it that the commission has to be given such far-reaching and wide powers? Why is it they are not subject to the Proceedings Against the Crown Act? Why are they not responsible for any neglect or default arising from their actions? What kinds of decisions is the commission going to be taking that requires them to be given these kinds of powers? These are very wide-sweeping.

1720

I've made it very clear, in the few moments I've had to participate in this debate, that we don't support Bill 104, that we are not opposed to amalgamating boards, lowering the number of boards in Ontario, that we are not opposed to lowering the number of trustees on boards. But we are opposed to this government's agenda, which is to take complete control of education away from local authorities and concentrate it in a bureaucracy at Queen's Park, concentrate it in the hands of the Minister of Education and Training, who is determined to take another \$1 billion out of education, starting in 1998, over the \$400 million he removed from education in 1996.

The reason for that desire to take that billion dollars so quickly out of education is because this government has an agenda which is designed to compromise the democ-

racy at the local level before the altar of a tax scheme, which is to give a significant tax break to very wealthy people on their income taxes in Ontario. I don't genuflect before the altar of that tax scheme; I'm opposed to it.

I recall the decisions that were taken on education over many years in this House. I note that education has been the centrepiece of most governments' approaches to governing in this province. Under John Robarts and Bill Davis education went through significant change in Ontario. Those changes were not rushed through in the manner that these changes are being rushed through. When Mr Davis brought in the county boards, it was very controversial. But Mr Davis wasn't determined to give a tax gift to his wealthy friends. Mr Davis cared about the education of students in their classrooms in Ontario, so he established a system which has served us well, a system that can be improved, a system that must be improved and adapted as we go into the 21st century, but a system that should not be wrecked by taking \$1 billion out of it in one year, a system that should not be wrecked by compromising local autonomy and local accountability.

The Progressive Conservative Party in Ontario historically has defended the rights and concerns of people in rural Ontario as well as people in urban Ontario. They have argued in favour of local autonomy. They have argued in favour of democracy at the local level. They have argued that local authorities must be given powers and responsibilities and that they must be accountable to their electors at the local level. Bill 104 denies that. Bill 104 takes away local accountability. Bill 104 will establish boards that are very large and that will not respond to the local needs of the community. Bill 104 establishes a commission with very widespread powers that will be able to deny the rights and privileges and responsibilities of locally elected, democratically elected trustees.

Bill 104 will facilitate the establishment of centralized control over education in this province. It will allow the minister and the Ministry of Education and Training to have complete control over funding and expenditures and curriculum in Ontario. These kinds of decisions will not be made by locally elected people who are responsible to the electors in their own communities. Instead of having people who can be turfed out if they don't do a good job, we'll have a number of bureaucrats in the Ministry of Education and Training making these crucial decisions about the education of our students and our children.

For those reasons, we're opposed to this legislation. We are not opposed to change in education, but we don't think there needs to be a rush to have it in place by January 1, 1998. Why not follow the example of the western jurisdictions the minister keeps referring to, Alberta and British Columbia, where they took three years to do this, not a few months?

**Mr Preston:** They're different.

**Mr Wildman:** The member says they're different. I suppose they are different. I don't know, but the difference may be that the government in British Columbia and perhaps even in Alberta cares about the education of kids. This government doesn't. That's the difference. All this government wants to do is take money out of education. They want to decimate one of the best education systems



in North America because they believe they have to get the money out. That's what this is about. For a short-term gain of \$1 billion to the treasury of this province we are compromising the future of the kids across Ontario.

We can't allow this to happen without arguing against it. We must have widespread hearings across Ontario to ensure that people who are concerned about this, concerned about the education of students —

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Thank you. Questions and comments?

**Mr O'Toole:** It's a pleasure to respond to the member for Algoma's remarks this afternoon on Bill 104. Just for those who were paying attention, the member said they're not opposed to fewer boards and they're not opposed to fewer trustees. The Liberals' statement during the election was saying very much the same thing. They recognized that there should be fewer boards and fewer trustees. I think we have unanimous agreement here and I think this bill is intending to do exactly that.

Everyone would respect the fact that the role of the implementation commission is very important so that there aren't inadvertent moves at the last moment by some boards, but I think that after all, we really want the same thing. Everyone in this chamber wants a quality education for our students, we want an accountable education system and we want an affordable education system.

I look at it and I talk about just one level: affordability. We have such disparity in the province, some areas spending as little as \$5,000 per student and some spending as much as \$8,000 and more per student. So there is some disparity. But I look at the whole system. For example, I think there are about two million students in Ontario, and we spend something in the order of \$14 billion. If you want to think about the students, we spend something above \$6,000 per student. I think really there's a lot of room for improvement, and you can't blame the partners today. The system itself has become paralysed. All the teachers I know are hardworking and dedicated and loyal to the commitment of quality education. so that's not a problem.

One small comment on his remarks about the size of school boards: I recognize that the size of school boards in the north will be a problem and a challenge, but with automation I think we can help to communicate. The parliamentary channel, which Mr Bradley is very familiar with, is seen all over Ontario, and I think that's one way of communicating the changes in education today.

*Interjection.*

**The Speaker:** Questions and comments? When you sit down, you stop talking. That's the rule in here.

**Mr Frank Miclash (Kenora):** Let me just make some comments on the previous comments that were made by the member for Durham East. He said that yes, there will be problems in the north, and he agrees with that. Actually in his comments he made a few days ago he suggested that we went by what Mr Sweeney said in his report, and that was totally wrong. Mr Sweeney said in his report that there should not only be two boards west of Thunder Bay, a public and a separate board, that that area should be divided further. That was the final report Mr Sweeney came out with after going out and meeting

with the people and finding out what was needed in the northwest.

The minister talks about not taking dollars out of the classroom. There is not one educator, administrator and now many parents who will believe what this minister is saying. Cuts to education are going to be cuts to classrooms. He must get that through to himself and realize that we are hurting the education of the children in our classrooms. Studies coming out are showing that we haven't got the best system. He talked today about having the best system back in Ontario. By taking \$1 billion out of the system, I don't care where he cuts it from, it will not ensure that we have the best system to meet the needs of the children in this province.

1730

Yes, the Sweeney report indicated that there should have been more attention paid to the north, but this government just went over and did exactly what they thought would best service the needs of the north against the wishes of northerners, putting one separate board, one public board to cover one third of the area of this province west of Thunder Bay.

I would just hope the minister would sit down and listen to some of the comments coming back from the people who are trying to service the needs of our students and ensure that education, not only for the north but for the entire province, remains number one in terms of his priorities for —

**The Speaker:** Thank you. Questions and comments?

**Mrs Boyd:** I want to congratulate the member for Algoma for his clear commitment to the issues that he's talking about and to make it clear that he is not alone on our side in saying that much restructuring is good in these things.

It's very interesting that one of the members, when the member for Algoma said that we're not against having fewer school boards and we're not against having fewer trustees in principle, said, "Well, then, we can just pass this right away." There's a great deal more in this bill, and it's fine for the members opposite to have the selective hearing that we saw from the member for Durham East, but you need to hear very clearly where the qualifications to that agreement are and where the concerns are.

The member for Durham East is right, as the member for Algoma pointed out, that you can eventually, over time and with a great investment, get telecommunications that enable people to participate, an individual to participate, but that doesn't mean that the members of the community can participate in those meetings. That was what local governance in education was all about. It has a fine tradition in this province and all of us benefited from the fact that there was local autonomy around many of the issues in education.

I find it extraordinary that the members of the government continue to heckle and to make assumptions about this not being a massive change. This is a huge and massive change. The control of education has moved completely away from the local governance model that we developed in this province, all of us as citizens, over many years. The contributions that individual commun-



ities can make, the decisions that they make with that autonomy, will no longer be real and we will —

**The Speaker:** Thank you. Questions and comments?

**Mr Parker:** I very much enjoyed listening to my friend from Algoma and his comments this afternoon. I think it bears just touching on a few points so that there's no confusion about some of the matters that are at issue in this subject and what this bill attempts to address.

Bear in mind that four provinces across the country have already brought about the type of reforms that this bill puts forward. One province, New Brunswick, has done away with school boards altogether, and in Quebec they're looking at the same type of reforms as well.

Over the last 10 years, enrolment in our schools has gone up by less than 20%, but school board spending in this province has gone up by over 80%. Provincial grants to schools have gone up by almost 40% and property taxes have gone up by 120%. School board spending has gone up by over 80%, whereas enrolment has gone up by less than 20%. That's a key reality that we have to address.

I don't think anyone in this chamber or anyone in this province would quibble with that if the quality of our education had gone up commensurately. But there's nothing to suggest that the quality has improved at all. Test after test shows that Ontario students do not score any higher than students elsewhere in the country. In many tests they score lower than other provinces that spend less on education. The question is not money; it's quality.

**The Speaker:** Response? The member for Algoma.

**Mr Wildman:** I'd like to thank the members for Durham East, Kenora, London Centre and York East for their comments. I would say that the member for Durham East has rather selective hearing. He did hear those portions of the bill that I said we were in favour of; he seems not to have heard all of the other portions of the bill that I had expressed serious concern about. It's a little like the government's attitude towards the royal commission's *For the Love of Learning*. As Mr Caplan has said, they take selectively, they cherry-pick out of it, they don't listen to the whole thing and take the whole thing as a package.

The member for Kenora points out very clearly that what the agenda is about is cutting classroom education. That's what this government is about; that's what its agenda is about. He also points out that the Sweeney report made significantly different recommendations than what has been decided by the government with regard to Bill 104. That's why we need to have hearings across the province so people in northwestern Ontario can express their concerns about having one board for that whole area.

The member for London Centre rightly pointed out that the problem with the new boards is that it is impossible, even if you have telecommunication hookups for trustees, for the members of the community to attend board meetings if you have these enormous areas to cover. They won't be able then to hold the trustees accountable in the way that they've been able to over the last number of years going back to the 1800s.

The member for York East pointed to New Brunswick. I will point out to the member for York East that there are fewer total students in the whole province of New Brunswick than there are in the city of Toronto. The situation is somewhat different. To suggest that because they did away with school boards we should do the same is ridiculous. For one thing, constitutionally we can't. What I said is that we should do what they did in BC and Alberta and take time to do it properly.

**The Speaker:** Further debate?

**Mr John R. Baird (Nepean):** I am pleased to have the opportunity to rise and speak on Bill 104. I think it's important at the outset of my remarks to set the record straight, to put a few personal comments on the record. We have a very good education system in the province of Ontario. The strength of that system has had a very positive effect on my own life. I received a good education in our system.

Particularly, many of the teachers that I had over the years made a positive impact on my life. In fact, one of the teachers I had served as president of the Carleton teachers' federation and was the one who encouraged my involvement in the political process and in the public policy process. She even ran for the Conservative nomination in my constituency and I had the opportunity to work for her campaign, the first campaign I was involved with.

I benefited immensely from the work and education of people like Kyle Murray, who now serves ably as the director of education at the Carleton board. Trustees who made a very positive contribution to our system in our community, ones I had the opportunity to benefit from, played a very important role; trustees like Jean Beamish and Norm Cooksey, who did a great job for our community over the years. I can also note the involvement of people in our community like Don Cummings, who served in a voluntary capacity in the effort to build Bell High School where I attended. They worked with the Nepean township council to get that high school built more than 30 years ago.

I know that today people in the Carleton Roman Catholic school board, in the administration, do a very good job. People like Phil Rocco, who now serves as director of education, and Ron Larkin, who retired last year, have contributed a great deal to our community over the last number of years.

When I hear members opposite say that on this side of the House we have nothing but contempt for those involved in the public service, I feel it's important to put on the record that I believe public service to be an honourable profession. My father, my stepmother and my sister have worked or are working in the public service, and I think that's something they can take great pride in. I can say that in my work at the Ministry of Labour I'm very privileged to work with a dedicated group of professionals who do an excellent job in what are very tough budgetary times. That's important to put on the record.

As well, at the outset of this debate it's very important to talk about the process. This isn't a bill being debated for a period of days here in the Legislature exclusively. What we've seen is a process that's both open and



consultative. The previous government, the New Democratic Party government of the day, appointed a very well-respected former Liberal cabinet minister, John Sweeney, to head a review of the school boards in the province of Ontario some years ago. He consulted extensively across the province and issued an interim report, printed on newsprint, sent out to hundreds of thousands of folks around Ontario. He solicited further input from that draft report. He then reviewed all those recommendations and amended his report accordingly before issuing a final report.

1740

The Minister of Education, the Honourable John Snobelen, wanted further consultation and asked every member of provincial Parliament to go back to their constituencies and to report back to him on what the response was to that report, an opportunity for further review and consultation.

Now we have Bill 104, where we have a full legislative process: first reading, second reading, committee hearings and indeed third reading. That's quite a long process, where public involvement was present at every stage.

I'd like to talk about what was done in my own constituency. I think there is widespread support for reducing the number of school boards, and that really goes across party lines. People of all political persuasions have told me they agree with the concept of reducing the number of school boards, that in Ottawa-Carleton perhaps we didn't need six school boards in one regional municipality. I do appreciate there is some disagreement with respect to this proposition, and reasonable people can differ. Some people don't support reducing the number of school boards, and they're certainly entitled to that. My view, having talked to many constituents in Nepean, is that by and large, folks support this initiative.

There were a lot of concerns coming out of the interim report by Mr Sweeney. I heard a number of concerns relating to the proposal to put Renfrew county in with the Carleton Roman Catholic Separate School Board in Ottawa-Carleton. Folks made that representation to me, and it was reflected in the changes that Mr Sweeney made. He listened and made amendment.

There was also a significant amount of concern with respect to the smaller, specialized school boards for children with special needs. Again, changes were made; the process saw changes. That was good to see, and that's very important as well.

It's also important to look at exactly what this bill does. This bill reduces the number of school boards from 129 to 66, and they will now be known as district boards. The changes will respect the constitutional rights contained in the British North America Act. Thirty-seven existing isolate and hospital boards will be retained and renamed school authorities.

The number of trustees across Ontario is being cut from 1,900 to 700. Trustees will no longer take home the equivalent of a full-time salary, and boards can provide an honorarium of up to \$5,000.

New criteria for the qualification of trustees will reduce the potential conflict of interest. School board employees and their spouses will not be able to serve as

trustees in any school board or authority within the province of Ontario.

There are a number of other initiatives in the bill that I think are worthy of note with respect to the involvement of parents. Whenever parents are involved in the educational process, I think we see improved accountability not just to the parents, but indeed to taxpayers as a whole.

In April 1995, the previous government asked school boards to establish advisory school councils, a move that I think was met with all-party support. Bill 104 will strengthen the councils by establishing them in legislation, something that didn't exist previously. Parents will now have a clear and consistent standard for what students should be learning and when, and for how that learning is funded. Beginning this year, the government will publish its own report card and ask the public and parents to grade its efforts, and I think that's key. When we measure performance, I believe we'll see better results, and I am very pleased to see that change in legislation.

When I look at the motive behind this bill, I think it could be simply put: to ensure a high-quality education system that is less costly and more accountable —

*Interjections.*

**Mr Baird:** I can appreciate that some of the members opposite would like to interject during this debate. I think that asking young people, asking students, asking a grade 1 student or a grade 8 student — to basically say to that student, "We're going to go to New York City to the bond market and borrow the money to fund your own education, and by the way, we'll send you the bill when you leave school," I don't think there is any social justice whatsoever. I don't think there's any morality in borrowing money so the next generation —

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker:** Order.

**Interjection:** It's incredible, Mr Speaker.

**The Speaker:** I'm not sure about that, but let's try and calm down somewhat.

**Mr Baird:** I appreciate the difficult job, Mr Speaker. Some of the members opposite simply don't want to hear that when we borrow money, we're borrowing it on the backs of the next generation. When we borrow money, we're asking young people to pay for their own education. It's essentially a user fee, an income-contingent loan repayment plan for kindergarten students, because they're going to be stuck with the bill. None of the people around Ontario will have to pay this debt. It will be the next generation, the young people of this province, who have been served very badly by governments which have borrowed and taxed and spent like drunken sailors, and that is wrong. There is no social justice in borrowing money in the name of children. That is very important: There is no social justice in borrowing in the name of children.

The government made a commitment to significant reforms in education in the Common Sense Revolution and I believe we're following through on that commitment. Ontarians have expressed concern about the quality and cost of education, the size of the education bureaucracy and duplication and waste among school boards.



We look at what's going on in other jurisdictions for best practices and what other provinces are doing. In Alberta, British Columbia, Newfoundland and Nova Scotia, governments being run by all political parties in Canada, by the New Democratic Party, the Conservative Party and the Liberal Party in these cases, they've reduced the number of school boards dramatically and undertaken a major streamlining of education. New Brunswick, as one of my colleagues previously mentioned, has recently eliminated school boards and trustees entirely and placed much heavier emphasis on parent involvement and control. That's something that's not in this bill. School boards are being maintained and we're increasing and strengthening the role of parents in the process, something that I believe is very important.

There are a number of other indicators of waste and inefficiency in education spending, and they were ably pointed out by my colleague the member for York East. Let's look at the last 10 years, the 10 years from 1985 to 1995.

**Mr Preston:** The last 10 years.

**Mr Baird:** Yes, the last 10 years, as my colleague says. Let's look at the growth in enrolment versus spending during that 10-year period. Enrolment increased by 16% over that 10 years, school board spending increased by 82%, provincial grants increased by 39%, but property taxes increased by 120%.

**Mr Wettlaufer:** How much?

**Mr Baird:** The member for Kitchener asked, "How much?" By 120%. That is simply unsustainable in the long term.

I look at the spending in different school boards in the province and I see dramatic differences, where some school boards educate children for dramatically less than other boards. I looked at the figures within the regional municipality of Ottawa-Carleton where today we have six school boards in one regional municipality. I look at the difference. The Carleton Roman Catholic Separate School Board has the lowest spending per pupil in the region yet upholds high standards for quality Catholic education. An example: The board maintains its position within the top five of Ontario's 168 school boards for student retention rates. What does that board spend per person? It is \$5,600 per elementary student. The Carleton Board of Education spends \$7,021.

But on the other side of the street from those school boards, from the area they service, on the other side of Baseline Road, instead of spending \$5,600 per student on an elementary student's education, the Ottawa public board spends over \$8,000, a 40% difference. One has to ask whether there's some vortex on Baseline Road in Ottawa-Carleton that the rest of us aren't aware of that would see a need for 40% more spending on one side of the road, yet the Carleton Roman Catholic board is among the top five of Ontario's 168 school boards for student retention. That's certainly an impressive accomplishment for the Carleton Roman Catholic board and the effective representation it has. We wonder why there could be such dramatic differences within the same regional municipality, and that's of course an issue that the government is looking at, one that merits some study.

1750

We do see some strange examples of education spending in certain parts of the province. The school boards in my area don't own golf courses, they don't have waterfalls in their board offices and they don't see their officials take trips to Southeast Asia on trade missions. I was reading the Toronto Sun this morning: "School Board Chief Told to Pay for Junket." Apparently, in one municipality here in the Toronto area, an individual took a two-week trip, estimated to cost the taxpayers \$20,000, accompanied by an elementary school principal, trips to Thailand, the Philippines and South Korea.

**Mr Gerretsen:** Why did he go there?

**Mr Baird:** Why were they there? On the Team Canada trade mission.

*Interjection.*

**Mr Baird:** One would have to ask why school boards would see it as their business to travel thousands of miles to the other side of the earth to recruit students. Perhaps that's an inappropriate expenditure of money. A defender of this action "said it was a revenue-generating chance to promote school board programs, not just a chance to get more visa students — who bring an additional \$200 profit per student annually," trying to turn a public school into some sort of a business. I think people can rightly wonder why they need to send elementary school principals to Thailand, the Philippines and South Korea. One could be very curious about issues like that.

I also look at what has been said by some of my colleagues, because this is a non-partisan issue. You haven't seen a tremendous divergence of opinion in the past, with the commission started by the New Democratic Party and then reporting under this government. I thought I'd read a quote from a good friend of mine who's a member. He said, "I think there's generally a fairly broad support for reduction in school boards."

**Mr Wettlaufer:** Who said that?

**Mr Baird:** Who said that? Dalton McGuinty. "We can't back away from the prospects of amalgamation. As Liberals, we're fiscally responsible. We've got to look at it." Who said that? Dalton McGuinty. He says there's "a very compelling argument." Who said that? Dalton McGuinty.

Another interesting quote: "There is such public support for this streamlining of the system that any government is going to have to follow through." You know who said that? David Cooke, NDP Minister of Education, to the Windsor Rotary Club in March 1995, when he was minister, before the election. You see, David Cooke has one policy, and it's the same policy now as it was before. That's important to note.

There's another important quote I'd like to put on the record, from Bill Robson, the chair of the Ontario Parent Council. "One of the things we thought was quite positive in this announcement was the focus on school-level decision-making, school councils. It's clearly one of the best ways you can make sure you're getting value for your money" — Bill Robson, chairman of the Ontario Parent Council, commenting on the new role in the legislation for parents.

Then, following up on the quotes from Mr McGuinty, I wondered what was contained in the Liberal campaign



manifesto, so I looked. I look at the plan for the first year, for year one. They promised to do this within the first year. They said: "Less administration: We will reduce the number of trustees" — done it — "cap their salaries" — done it — "introduce guidelines for spending on administration and clearly define school boards' roles" —

**Mr O'Toole:** Doing it.

**Mr Baird:** Done it.

The Liberal red book said: "We will make sure that we are getting value for our dollar. As much as possible, our education dollars must be spent on classroom learning, rather than on administration. Reducing the number of trustees, placing a cap on the salaries of trustees and recognizing the part-time nature of the job," is a very important component of the Liberal campaign strategy. This bill does it. Less money on administration, more money spent on classroom education; more money spent in the classroom, where the teachers are, where the students are, where the learning takes place.

**The Speaker:** Questions and comments?

**Mr Michael Brown:** A very entertaining intervention by the member for Nepean. One of the things that concerns me is the way we throw around this chatter about the Sweeney report and the amalgamation. You pointed out that all three parties understood that there needed to be some amalgamations, but what the government has proposed is in no way even remotely close to what Mr Sweeney had suggested in his report, and I think we should make that clear.

I want to talk particularly about the constituency I represent. One of the things that's very interesting here is that what's happened in the proposed amalgamation of school boards is that the Manitoulin board and the Espanola board will now be amalgamated with the Sudbury board. The North Shore board and the central Algoma board, which is actually in Mr Wildman's constituency, will go to Sault Ste Marie. That sounds interesting. The problem is that the North Shore separate board will go with Sault Ste Marie. That means the town of Espanola will have a public board that is amalgamated with Sudbury and a separate board that is amalgamated with the Sault.

All these boards, the five boards, had created a co-op, had been working together, so busing and all those interesting problems you have in administration were working quite well. The Espanola and North Shore boards were sharing a director of education; that can't happen any more. The Espanola and North Shore boards were also sharing business administration; that can't happen any more.

I'm really quite concerned that not only are local people going to have very little input into what boards do, but some of the efficiencies that were found by these very hardworking boards are going to be lost.

**Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre):** I appreciate the opportunity to respond to the comments of the member for Nepean. I certainly don't very often agree with what he says, and today is no different, but I always enjoy listening to him say it. I think he does it with a certain flare and level of belief on his part; I find him to be an honourable member. But I do want to take excep-

tion to a couple of things he said because they cause me a great deal of concern as I think about my own community in Hamilton and the implication of the changes you're making in education.

First of all, the member had the audacity, the absolute audacity, to talk about money being borrowed to pay for the school system and how unfair that is to little kids entering kindergarten and grade 1, and I think he said grade 8. He said how awful that is, that it's a terrible thing to do, yet he's prepared to stand by his government as it borrows \$5 billion a year to give its very wealthy friends a 30% tax cut. It's starting to sink in out there that that tax cut is not going to benefit the average working, middle-class family, that it's those who are already well-off, and you're going to borrow the money to give them that. Nobody is going to believe it's a fair tradeoff to borrow that money on the backs of those same little kids you talked about so you can take care of your friends with a 30% tax cut.

The second point I want to make is that you talked about the importance of the parent councils, which we brought in, by the way, and you say that strengthening them is going to matter, yet I would point out to the member that by watering down the trustees they're liaising with, you're actually reducing their level of influence.

On those two points, I believe the member is way off the mark.

**Mr O'Toole:** It is certainly a pleasure today to respond to the very on-the-point remarks made by the member for Nepean. When he opened his comments, I think those who were listening would find that he went out of his way to compliment the people who are working in education today. Indeed, I think we're all after the same thing: We're really after quality in the classroom. Everything I heard the member for Nepean saying was encouraging each one of us in the House here today to give these changes a chance.

If you think of the two million students in Ontario, they're counting on each one of us to work together to make education accountable, affordable and available to every student with special needs. Each one of the students we have in our riding I know is being recognized daily by their boards and by their teachers and encouraged to strive for excellence as we move in the global economy today.

I want to make one small point. When you look at the size of boards, I remember back in 1969-70 when the boards were changing. At that time there were 1,400 school boards and we moved down to some 70 or 80 school boards. It was a significant change at that time. When I was first elected as a school trustee, the same issues we're discussing today were indeed the issues of the day in the 1980s: talking about the number of school trustees, the size of boards and the role and duty of trustees. In fact, I think what we've got to focus our time on after all is the student and the curriculum and the need to address the changes in technology today.

The school board that I was on was the Peterborough-Victoria-Northumberland Roman Catholic board, and it was always said to be the size of Portugal, a fairly large board. But people worked hard and they worked together to provide accountable, affordable education.



**Mr Gerretsen:** I always enjoy the comments of the member for Nepean. He actually made some relevant points, but what he didn't say was that what this is really all about is for the government to take complete control of the education system. He sort of talked about it in a roundabout way, but he never actually said that. It's kind of interesting; in this whole debate we've heard nobody from the government actually say that, that what the government is really interested in is taking complete control of the education system in its entirety and that boards of trustees, no matter how large an area they will represent, will almost become token members, in effect, because they will not have any power to tax and they therefore will have lost their entire effectiveness.

The really sad part about this is the fact that boards of education have been around in this province since the 1830s. As a matter of fact, they go back much further in time than, let's say, even local councils or municipal government. So this really is the end of an era where people in their own communities had some say as to the level of education and the quality of education they wanted for their students.

It's very interesting to bat all sorts of figures around as to how much is being expended by one board per pupil as opposed to another board per pupil, but of course it doesn't talk about perhaps the special programs that exist in one area that don't exist in other areas because of the special needs of the particular students in one area as opposed to another area.

I think what the taxpayers of Ontario have to understand is that this is all about the government of Ontario taking complete control of the education system.

**The Speaker:** Response? The member for Nepean.

**Mr Baird:** I would like to thank my colleagues the members for Algoma-Manitoulin, Hamilton Centre, Durham East and Kingston and The Islands for their responses.

I would indicate first to my friend from Algoma-Manitoulin that the Sweeney report has been followed 75% to the letter, and that's a number which is ironically close to the Liberal red book. Jean Chrétien says he has fulfilled over 75% of campaign promises and that that was a home run, so this must be pretty good.

I would also indicate to him that school boards will still be allowed to work together to save taxpayers money. That's not affected by this bill. They're still allowed and still encouraged to work together. If they want to go and save the taxpayers even more money than this bill, that's a good thing.

I'd also indicate to my colleague the member for Hamilton Centre that probably the biggest problem I have with him is that I actually believe he believes the stuff that he says.

**Mr Christopherson:** A hundred per cent.

**Mr Baird:** "A hundred per cent," he says. That's what I enjoy, and he's always consistent. You can agree or disagree with the member, but you've always got to respect that he has only one opinion on an issue, and that's something that I think is important.

But when he talks about students and debt, right now in the province of Ontario, we have \$46,600 of debt per young person, per student, in this province. That is simply something that is unacceptable for the next generation. I think for my generation and those who succeed me, this bill will be an important part of our plan to get less debt and to have more opportunity for the future. We know from the record of the last five and even 10 years that more taxes, more debt, equals less jobs, less hope and less opportunity for the future of Ontario. This bill is a small part of turning that around, of creating more jobs, more hope and opportunity for a better province.

**The Speaker:** It now being past 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 1:30 of the clock tomorrow.

*The House adjourned at 1805.*



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No. 157

N° 157

ISSN 1180-2987

**Legislative Assembly  
of Ontario**

**Assemblée législative  
de l'Ontario**

First Session, 36th Parliament

Première session, 36<sup>e</sup> législature

**Official Report  
of Debates  
(Hansard)**

**Journal  
des débats  
(Hansard)**

**Wednesday 5 February 1997**

**Mercredi 5 février 1997**



**Speaker**  
Honourable Chris Stockwell

**Président**  
L'honorable Chris Stockwell

**Clerk**  
Claude L. DesRosiers

**Greffier**  
Claude L. DesRosiers



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# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 5 February 1997

# ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 5 février 1997

*The House met at 1332.  
Prayers.*

## MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

### PELEE ISLAND FERRY SERVICES

**Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex South):** I rise today to inform this House and the government about my great concern over the recent elimination of provincial funding for the Pelee Island ferry service. It is a serious issue that requires the attention of the Minister of Transportation, who to date has not responded to my request for a meeting with the minister and local stakeholders.

The minister will know that the ferry service to Pelee Island is not only important for 250 permanent residents of the island but is of vital economic importance to the agricultural community on the island; the wine industry, where hundreds of acres of grapes are grown for the mainland winery; and for the tourism industry, where each year millions of dollars flow through the local economy not only from mainland Canada but from the United States as well.

Also, the economic impact of the ferry service is felt in the nearby mainland towns of Leamington and Kingsville, where infrastructure and jobs are reliant on the regular service of the ferry. Moreover, many aspects of business planning for the agriculture and tourism sectors must be completed up to a year in advance.

There are 250 permanent residents who are literally being left out in the middle of Lake Erie by this government. The island and its people are Canadians and Ontarians who deserve the same access to the rest of our province as all its other citizens.

I respectfully ask the minister to place a priority on this issue and meet with me and the officials from Pelee Island, Leamington and Kingsville as soon as possible.

### HIGHWAY 560

**Mr Floyd Laughren (Nickel Belt):** Highway 560 runs between Elk Lake and Highway 144 and is badly in need of rebuilding. The people of Shining Tree, Westree, Morin Village and Gowganda depend on this road and are very concerned for their safety.

Highway 560 is heavily used by logging trucks, which share the road with school buses and family cars, yet there are places where this two-lane highway is not wide enough for vehicles to pass in opposite directions. There are turns so sharp that trucks have to go in the opposite lane to get around the corner, and there are rock cuts so narrow that snowplows cannot get the snow off the road.

Over the past several years, parts of Highway 560 have been widened, straightened and repaved, but there is still a lot of work to do. At this time of year, when the Minister of Transportation and the Minister of Northern Development and Mines are determining their priorities for road construction for 1997, I want them to remember the people who live along Highway 560 as they make their allocations.

Today I will be forwarding letters from more than 50% of the households in the area to the ministers involved, and I ask them to make sure that this highway is not forgotten simply because these communities are small. There may be bigger and busier highways elsewhere in the province, but I'm sure there are few highways in as bad a state as Highway 560.

### PETERBOROUGH ECONOMY

**Mr R. Gary Stewart (Peterborough):** I rise in the House to inform all members about another positive opportunity that has come to the riding of Peterborough. Last Friday my colleague and good friend Chris Hodgson, the Minister of Natural Resources, came to Peterborough to sign a cooperative agreement between the MNR, Trent University and Sir Sandford Fleming College. This agreement will create a watershed science centre at Trent University and a sustainable ecology institute at Sir Sandford Fleming College's Frost campus in Lindsay. The ministry's expertise and the quality of the facilities at these schools will assist our government in developing greater environmental initiatives while providing students an opportunity to expand their skills and knowledge.

Now that the new MNR building is open in Peterborough, we are going to see positive things happen again in our community. New employees are moving to our great city and businesses in the downtown will reap the rewards of greater consumer traffic. The MNR move to Peterborough is a very positive relocation.

Many thanks to the presidents of Sir Sandford Fleming College and Trent University for their cooperation in establishing these new long-term partnership agreements, many thanks to the Minister of Natural Resources for attending last Friday, and many thanks to the people of Peterborough for welcoming the MNR and its employees to our great community.

### FARM TAX REBATE PROGRAM

**Mr Pat Hoy (Essex-Kent):** When the Minister of Agriculture announced changes to the farm tax system, he was very vocal about saving the farmers the time and inconvenience of applying for and receiving a rebate. But



this is only half the story. What was not pointed out was that at the end of the day, farmers will pay more on their tax bill. The government's mega-week announcements dumped on to the farmers and other taxpayers of Ontario long-term health care, ambulance service, policing, welfare and roads, among other costs.

When the farm tax rebate was removed, the minister did not address the problems that rural municipalities will face in replacing this lost revenue. How can rural Ontario cope with the demise of this rebate, which creates a shortfall of \$171 million? Some rural municipalities depend on the property tax rebate for 50% or more of their revenue. These municipalities have been holding the line on taxes for years. They cannot make up the 50% revenue reduction without raising the taxes on hard-working farm families.

We know that we will be competing for your questionable reinvestment fund with large urban centres. The government must commit to replace this money, the lost revenue, dollar for dollar so that rural Ontario can survive and be the engine of economic growth. Give them that guarantee, Minister. Give it today.

### HOSPITAL RESTRUCTURING

**Mr Rosario Marchese (Fort York):** Last night I held a public meeting in my riding to hear community concerns about the proposed merger of the Queen Street Mental Health Centre and the Clarke Institute of Psychiatry. These hospitals have had very different mandates in the past. The Clarke Institute is primarily a research facility associated with the University of Toronto and Queen Street is a treatment facility run by the province.

People in the community to whom we spoke last night are very concerned because there has not to date been sufficient consultation with them. They are asking, is this merger really necessary and is it in the best interests of the community and the people they serve? They're concerned that the staff may be cut and that the most vulnerable people in our society, the severely mentally ill, may suffer as a result.

I believe the real issue here is the Harris government's cost-cutting agenda. The Minister of Health has already announced that there will be substantial cuts to hospital budgets this year. We've read that, we've heard about that. Hospitals feel threatened, so some of them, like Queen Street and the Clarke Institute, are rushing into mergers in a desperate attempt to deal with the cuts, without adequate time for public consultation. I ask, why the rush? Hasty decisions will not have good results. Hospitals must be given the time to plan for everyone concerned.

1340

### SMALL BUSINESS INVESTMENT

**Mr Tom Froese (St Catharines-Brock):** I am pleased to share with the House that the Minister of Finance announced yesterday an enhancement to the small business investment tax credit for banks. This tax credit will provide greater opportunities for Ontario's new and emerging small businesses to get the financing they need to grow, prosper and create jobs.

The government consulted with the small business and investment communities. The advice provided through these consultations has made the tax credit more responsive to the needs of small business. Small business asked the government to target the credit to smaller firms, those that often have the toughest time getting the money they need to expand, and that is what we have done.

In recognition of the higher transaction costs associated with smaller investments, the size of the tax credit will be increased up to a maximum of 20% for investments under \$250,000. We are also extending the credit to include investments in unincorporated businesses. Small business investments made through qualifying small business investment funds will also be eligible for the tax credit.

Our goal is to create jobs and support economic growth. To create jobs, new and growing businesses need access to sources of capital that believe in their potential. Our government is taking action to help make that happen.

### HOSPITAL FINANCING

**Mr Gerard Kennedy (York South):** I want to revisit an issue that we talked about on Monday, and that issue is the Harris government's attempt to hoodwink the people of Ontario with a \$57-million reinvestment announcement. I want to reiterate the point I made then, that our part-time health minister was announcing re-investing money at the very same time, on the same day, that his ministry was advising hospitals of new and drastic cuts of \$435 million to their budgets, the second instalment along the way to a \$1.3-billion devastation of this province's hospitals.

We now have some of the details about how drastic these cuts will be. We have the evidence that shows in 1996-97, following that, a 7.7% cut for 1997-98 for North York Branson Hospital, a 7.9% cut to Windsor's Hotel Dieu Hospital, an 8.2% cut to Brockville's St Vincent Hospital, an 8.9% cut to Paris's Willett Hospital, and a 9% cut to Ottawa General Hospital. The list goes on, with cuts to individual hospitals of up to \$10 million.

When we look at the two-year cuts, we now have hospitals contending with 14% cuts, like Etobicoke General; 14% cuts, like Kingston's Hotel Dieu; a 23% cut over two years to Peterborough's St Joseph's.

The Premier said yesterday that he has chosen to refuse the advice of OHA to hold off on these cuts taking place. We know who we can trust. We know we can't trust a Premier who wants to fund a tax cut on the backs of patients across this province.

### MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

**Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine):** Mr Speaker, sometimes in this House it's really difficult for us to find the appropriate language when we're trying to describe the government's actions; you know, those days when they say that black is white and white is black, and we don't know how to express it adequately, like when the Minister of Health announced a \$57-million reinvestment when he was actually cutting over \$400 million, or like the day when the Premier was asked about the 40 million new dollars in child care that hadn't



been spent and he said, "It's the municipality's fault; they haven't picked up that money," yet the minister admits she never offered it to them, that she had put a freeze on the money. It is hard.

I have another example. Last night at a community meeting, there were over 200 people out fighting the megacity, and a constituent gave me this. He wrote it. It's called A Steve Gilchrist Story:

"On Monday morning, Steve Gilchrist was on Metro Morning, and he said he had to support the megacity because Ken Morrish, councillor in Scarborough, did a poll, and 80% of his constituents supported amalgamation, so he had to do it.

"Next day, Frank Faubert, the mayor, calls in and tells the real story. The poll that was done asked three things: (1) 'Do you want lower taxes? (2) Are you in favour of actual value assessment? (3) Do you want fewer politicians?'"

The question, "Do you want Scarborough to be amalgamated into a unified city?" was never asked, and yet Mr Gilchrist touts it over. My constituent ends up saying, "What this says about Mr Gilchrist and, by extension, the facts of the Harris government, we leave to your musing."

**Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Unanimous consent to do it again.

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Unanimous consent to do it again? No.

#### WIARTON WILLIE

**Mrs Barbara Fisher (Bruce):** On February 2, every year since 1956, Canada's foremost weather prognosticator, Wiarton Willie, has emerged from hibernation to pronounce his winter weather report. Since his discovery he has delivered predictions on the remaining course of each winter with over 90% accuracy.

The famous albino groundhog was born in Bruce county. His mystique is enhanced by the fact that he was born precisely on the 45th parallel, the midway point between the equator and the North Pole. Rumour also has it that Willie maintains his trim figure with corn chips and salsa, and his hero is Red Green.

The annual festival that accompanies Willie's prediction draws thousands of participants, as well as international media that broadcast to all corners of the globe. In fact, Willie gets e-mail from more than 20 countries. Although Willie's predictions were a little shaky last year, many believe the leap year and his 40th birthday added too much pressure.

This year Willie's prediction was consistent with that of his Pennsylvania counterpart, Punxsutawney Phil. Neither groundhog saw his shadow and both predicted an early spring.

Organizers of the festivities are looking to municipal, provincial and federal politicians for their support in recognizing Wiarton Willie as Canada's groundhog and declaring Groundhog Day, or the first Monday in February, a Canadian national holiday.

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** There are many lines I could use at the end of that, and I'm not going to.

#### BLACK HISTORY MONTH

**Mr Alvin Curling (Scarborough North):** On a point of privilege, Mr Speaker: May I ask for unanimous consent to recognize February as Black History Month?

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Do we have unanimous consent to recognize February as Black History Month? Agreed.

**Mr Curling:** The month of February is celebrated as Black History Month. Many people have really asked the question, why Black History Month? What it does is that it provokes good debates and discussions on the contribution of the black people in our society in Canada, on the positive things they have done, and sometimes recognizes the struggles that have happened over the past years.

It brings pride to the people in our black communities when a successful black man or a successful black woman achieves. That person, that father, that mother, that aunt feels there is a role model which they can emulate. Because that person contributes to society as a whole, we as a society of course benefit overall on this.

February has been recognized in North America for over 72 years now as Black History Month. Since it started, Canada has come into that fold and itself has seen many prominent blacks who have contributed to our society.

What we have seen also with the achievements of blacks is many of the struggles and challenges that face them ahead. They are one of the most vulnerable peoples in our society that are still struggling to have equal access to jobs and of course to opportunities in schools etc.

Government plays a very important role for those people in our society to make sure that they can and do contribute, because contributing and having access to those situations helps us all.

Recently we saw a prominent black man who was the Ontario guardian pass away, and over 2,000 people attended the funeral to talk about his contribution. That afternoon we heard people speaking highly of those contributions. Today in this month, as we celebrate Black History Month and as we look to those who have contributed, I ask every parliamentarian to remember some of the struggles and challenges ahead for our people in our society. It is incumbent upon every one of us to make sure that access for those people is being seen. We have seen employment equity in the past that did not see the achievement of those people who are still denied access to jobs and are still denied access to opportunities, and I ask this Parliament to take a very serious look at it.

1350

Last year we were overwhelmed in Canada by Donovan Bailey's achievements as a Canadian. Many young people, as I speak to them in schools, tell me how proud they feel about Donovan Bailey. Of course, he's a black man, and those young people who feel they cannot contribute effectively in our society feel a part of that. Not only black people but all Canadians celebrated his achievements.

I say to you all, this month take the time in your constituency to visit some of the wonderful events that are happening; take time to look at the displays in the lobby of Parliament, because we have always had some displays there that recognize the achievements of blacks;



take a look at the display outside where the coloured men who participated in the First World War are being recognized. We in Parliament have always recognized some of the black achievements that have happened. We want to sing those praises more. We want to make sure that we're sensitive to all the things we do in our policies and the directions we want to go.

I ask all my colleagues to join in recognizing February as Black History Month as a positive contribution to society.

**Mr Tony Silipo (Dovercourt):** I'm pleased to rise today on behalf of the New Democratic Party caucus to join in the recognition of February as the commemoration of Black History Month.

We note that this is a celebration that goes back a number of years. In fact this month-long event began back in 1926 when it was known as Negro History Week. It was started in the United States by Carter G. Woodson, a black educator and publisher from New Canton, Virginia.

Incidentally, February was chosen initially because it is the month of the birthdays of both Abraham Lincoln and emancipator Frederick Douglass, birthdays which fall on February 12 and 14 respectively.

It is a month which has grown over the years, which has taken root across many parts of the world and certainly here in Canada. We are proud to be part of this process and to recognize it today.

I think there's a fair question that people could ask: Why have a Black History Month? It is of course a time when African Canadians across this province and across Canada can look back to their African roots in North America with pride, but at the same time it is an opportunity for the rest of us to learn about the history and the involvement and the contribution of blacks to Canada and to Canadian history and the evolution of this country.

In fact the celebration of Black History Month is indeed an attempt to have the important achievements of people of African descent in Canada included. I think we could list many a Canadian of African descent, of black descent, who has contributed greatly to this country in recent times, but I think it's worthwhile noting that those contributions and that involvement go back to the days before Canada even existed as a country.

The first known black to arrive in Canada was Mathieu Da Costa. He acted as a translator between the Micmac Indians and Samuel de Champlain, the French explorer who came here in the early 1600s as a discoverer of the New World. Clearly Da Costa had already been in Canada some time even prior to Champlain's voyage of discovery since Micmac is neither a European nor an African language, and he was here in the capacity of interpreter.

There are many others who can be cited in the years and centuries that followed. We know, as we look back at our own history here in Ontario, we can trace back settlements at least two hundred years ago in which blacks were prominent and made up a significant chunk of the community.

I think it's fair to say that while that celebration takes place — and it should take place with great pride — Black History Month is also an occasion for us to take

stock of the differences that still exist. I think it would be incomplete to note the marking of this month if we didn't also note that there are many within the black community who feel justifiably that there are issues of racism, issues of injustice as they pertain to education, as they pertain to the justice system that still need to be addressed.

I know they and many others would tell us that the greatest day would come, in their eyes, when we did not have to use Black History Month as a way to note the contributions simply because those contributions of this formidable part of our community would and should be noticed and noted every day in our classrooms and every day in the fairness and practices that we want for all of ourselves, for our children and for our communities.

It's in that spirit too that I, on behalf of our caucus, mark this very important month and urge all my colleagues also to use it as a time of reflection to help us address the many inequities that still exist.

**Hon Marilyn Mushinski (Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation):** I am happy to have this opportunity today to echo some of the sentiments expressed by my honourable colleague from Scarborough Centre this past Monday. I'm also particularly pleased to have this opportunity to support the member for Scarborough North in his efforts to highlight this important event.

This is the second year since the federal government declared February Black History Month, and it's a pleasure to have this opportunity to rise in this House today to mark this special occasion on behalf of my party. We are fortunate to live in a province like Ontario. Our identity is based in a strong foundation of diverse cultural traditions. People from a wide variety of backgrounds have made significant contributions to this society, not the least of which are the accomplishments of our vibrant black community.

It is important that we mark this celebration and pay tribute to the many contributions this community has made in politics, the arts, education, medicine, sport, and the list goes on. But the important thing is to recognize that our society is made stronger and is defined by the varied contributions of all its members.

I am pleased to see that Black History Month has grown so much since its inception in 1926. Carter G. Woodson's dreams are kept alive by this growing annual tradition as more and more people become involved in the month-long celebrations here in Ontario and across North America.

This special session of the Legislature has provided us with a unique opportunity to recognize this important event. It is a privilege, as the Minister of Citizenship, to have this opportunity to recognize this event here on the floor of this Legislature.

## ORAL QUESTIONS

### CONFLICT OF INTEREST

**Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition):** I have a question for the Premier. It has to do with integrity and it has to do with the standards you have set for your office.



About a year ago in your budget you promised that you would "establish procedures to require the registration of all persons and firms who lobby the government." You have not done anything in that regard to date.

In his last annual report the Integrity Commissioner expressed his concern that conflict rules did not apply to senior political staff. You have also failed to do anything in that regard.

You will know that the federal government has in place some extensive conflict rules for political staff. They are subject to a cooling-off period. In fact, they're restricted from directly lobbying the government for one full year. In Ontario there are still no rules governing the activities of political staff. Premier, can you tell me why you have not moved to regulate lobbying in Ontario, and particularly why you have not restricted the activities of your former staff members as lobbyists?

**Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier):** It is an area that obviously neither the Liberals nor the NDP moved on when they were in government and we felt was important, and we committed to do so. The proposals for bills are going through the legislative process of government. I don't think anybody in this House or in the province of Ontario would say that we haven't been a busy government and that we haven't had a lot of important items on the agenda. Such legislation is going through the process. I expect that shortly it will be before the House, and actually, with the cooperation of all parties and less caterwauling and yelling and stonewalling on legislation, perhaps we could get it passed this spring.

**Mr McGuinty:** Premier, let me tell you why this is so important. Ed Arundell, your communications director, just left to take on a position as senior VP at the lobby firm of Hill and Knowlton. Hill and Knowlton just received a lucrative contract as part of a \$50-million Market Ontario campaign. Mitch Patten, formerly your deputy principal secretary, took a job with Canadian Highways International. Despite protests from the auditor, that company was allowed to bypass the tendering process for a huge contract involving the maintenance of Highway 407.

Premier, you will be aware, as I am, that senior staffers are privy to highly sensitive and confidential information. They not only know what you're going to do tomorrow, but they know what you're going to do next week and in many cases they know what the government is going to do next month and even what it's going to do a year away. That information can be exceptionally valuable to people who want to do business with the government. Do you not feel that there is a very serious problem here and that there ought to be some restriction placed on senior political staffers who were formerly employed through your office?

**Hon Mr Harris:** In spite of the fact that neither your government nor the NDP thought there should be, we do, and we are bringing forward comprehensive legislation. In the interim, in the absence of any legislation being inherited from either the Liberal government or the NDP government, and as we work on it, we have said to our senior staff, "We expect you to conduct yourselves as if legislation existed."

Therefore, Mr Arundell had absolutely nothing to do, no say and was not part of any award of any contracts that had anything to do with the Market Ontario initiative. Secondly, upon leaving the government, he can have absolutely nothing to do with anything at Hill and Knowlton in relationship to the government with any file he worked on. The same applies for Mitch Patten. The same applies for all my staff. In spite of the fact you left us no legislation, we have set those standards for our staff even without the legislation.

**Mr McGuinty:** Premier, let's again lend some focus to what we're talking about here. These are some of the people who have left your office: Paul Rhodes, your senior media adviser, has left; Perry Martin, your senior justice policy adviser, has left; Ed Arundell, your director of communications, has left; Mitch Patten, your deputy principal secretary, has left. All have left to act as lobbyists and consultants for those doing business with your government. They are subject to no restrictions whatsoever at the present time.

You will know that ministers of the crown are subject to a cooling off period. They can't do business with you for a period of one year afterwards. If they don't abide by that rule, they are subject to a fine in the amount of \$50,000. Again, political staffers are subject to no such restrictions.

In my opinion, the situation that exists is completely unacceptable. I want you to commit today, Premier, that you're going to take action as soon as possible to restrict your government's senior staffers to ensure they can't pass off and profit from secret insider information.

**Hon Mr Harris:** I appreciate that the current leader perhaps does not recall when the Liberal government was in power and the current Premier and the current Deputy Premier lobbied to expand that bill to include senior civil servants along with the politicians. But no, the Liberals voted it down. They said: "No, no, we don't want to cover them. We want our staffers" — I guess — "to be able to go out here, we want senior bureaucrats." The NDP for five years did nothing as well. We committed to do it. We will do it. In addition to that, we expect our staff to follow those principles that will be in legislation even though the legislation is not there.

I might add, since you brought up Mr Patten, that you neglected to mention to the House and those who might be watching that the contract you referred to was one that was tendered and awarded when the NDP were in government.

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Order. Come to order, the member for Northumberland.

**Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland):** No, not me, it was him.

**The Speaker:** No, I don't think it was him. I think it was you, so come to order.

## HOSPITAL RESTRUCTURING

**Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition):** My second question is for the Premier as well. On the evening of May 15, 1995, during the leaders' debate, televised province-wide, Global's Robert Fisher asked



you, "Can you guarantee us tonight that your pledge to protect health care will mean that you will not close hospitals?" Your response, Premier, was very clear and very, very unequivocal. You said, "Certainly, I can guarantee you that it is not my plan to close hospitals." When did you decide — it's important for us to know this — that you were going to break your promise made to voters on province-wide television?

**Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier):** I'm glad you brought it up, and you brought it up yesterday and you brought it up 10 or so times before, and I'm happy to answer it each and every time. Robert Fisher asked the question because Lyn McLeod said, "Yes, I'd close hospitals." Bob Rae said during the campaign, "We have a restructuring commission that's going about to decide which hospitals should be closed." The question was, did we have a restructuring commission, did we plan, did I have a plan? I said: "No, I don't. I don't have a plan. We don't have a restructuring commission —

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Order. Premier, order. I appreciate the question-and-answer time, but I want to hear the answer and I'm having great difficulty.

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker:** Please, will the opposition come to order. The members for Cochrane South and Welland-Thorold. Thank you. Premier.

**Hon Mr Harris:** So in 1995 the Liberals and the NDP I guess already had plans to close hospitals. We did not. We said we would await the local restructuring commission that the NDP had set up, and following election we awaited their report. We have asked local district health councils, we have asked locally developed reports prepared by local people to give us their recommendations and to give us their advice. I suggest to you that we have done exactly as we committed to do. We acknowledged —

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker:** Order. Premier. Thank you. Supplementary.

**Mr McGuinty:** For the Premier's edification, I want to repeat my question. Robert Fisher asked —

*Interjections.*

**Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South):** What did Mike say, Mr Fisher? I'll tell you, it's Robert Fisher's fault.

**The Speaker:** Order. You can't heckle other members and you can't heckle reporters as well. It's out of order.

**Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold):** Well, let Fisher answer the question. He was there. He knows what the Premier said.

**The Speaker:** The member for Welland-Thorold, come to order. Thank you. Leader of the Opposition.

**Mr McGuinty:** On May 15, 1995, at about 6:55 in the evening, in Ontario, Robert Fisher asked of the Premier: "Can you guarantee us tonight that your pledge to protect health care will mean that you will not close hospitals?" The Premier answered, clearly and unequivocally, "Certainly, I can guarantee you that it is not my plan to close hospitals."

I want to ask you again, Premier: When did you first decide to break that promise?

**Hon Mr Harris:** On June 15, whatever it was, 1995, Robert Fisher asked me the question, do I have a plan to close hospitals? No, I do not. I said I understand that the Liberals will, I understand the NDP have a process but we do not. We had not studied hospitals or what should close.

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker:** Order. I would ask the members for Sudbury East, London Centre and Riverdale to come to order.

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker:** That's out of order as well, member for Burlington South.

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker:** I'll wait.

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker:** I want to warn those three members, please come to order. That's out of order.

**Hon Mr Harris:** To date we've closed no hospitals. Upon taking office, along with an \$11-billion deficit we inherited a report in progress, developed locally, on what should be done about hospitals and we have set up another committee to do that.

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I don't know what your argument is. I understand that on December 13, 1996, well after the election, well after the restructuring commission that we inherited, that was there, Mr McGuinty — this is the current leader of the Liberal Party, the one asking the questions, the one who brings forward all the kinds of information, like Mitch Patten, that had nothing to do with our government, that's the level of his questioning — Mr McGuinty said, "Yes, I might close hospitals as part of a plan for better-integrated health care services across the province." We are saying, if that flows out of local communities, of local hospitals, then we will take a look at that.

**Mr McGuinty:** I am not the guy who said on May 15, 1995, at about 6:55 in the evening —

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker:** Order. Member for London South, the Minister for Municipal Affairs and Housing, the Minister for Community and Social Services as well, it's just as wrong for you to be heckling when the leader is up as well. Now, please come to order. I want to hear the questions and answers.

**Hon David H. Tsubouchi (Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations):** He's reading it anyway, Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Minister, he can repeat the same question 25 times. Those are the rules. If he wants to, he can. If you choose to see it that way, that's your choice, but I want to hear him.

**Mr McGuinty:** I am not the guy who said at that time and on that date, "Certainly, I can guarantee you that it is not my plan to close hospitals." If the Premier has any doubt whether or not people in this province feel he has broken his promise, he should travel to Thunder Bay and ask them. He should go to Sudbury and ask them. More recently, he should go to Meaford, Walkerton, Chesley, Durham, Fort Erie, Port Colborne and he should ask them whether he is living up to his commitment. This is a very straightforward matter.



Premier, you said, "Certainly, I can guarantee you that it is not my plan to close hospitals." You have clearly broken that promise. But you also made another one. You said that if you were to break any of your promises, you would resign. Your word was your bond. That's how important your commitments were, that if you broke a promise you would resign. So now, Premier, I'm going to leave it to you. What do you think you ought to do in the circumstances?

**Hon Mr Harris:** Given that I acknowledge the quote you made, that's exactly what I said and that is exactly the situation in May, and given that actually I currently have no plans either, today, to close hospitals, but what we did —

*Interjections.*

**Hon Mr Harris:** Well, I'm sorry, but I don't. What we did inherit, of course —

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker:** Order.

**Hon Mr Harris:** Let me be clear about what I said on health care, because I think this is very, very important. What we said on health care was that we would seek savings, we would try to find reductions in some areas of health care spending, and as we said in the Common Sense Revolution, we would reinvest every dollar that we could save by whatever means. We said we'd consult and we would study. Now, if that meant that in the future citizens felt we should close one building and reinvest those savings in another or in new programs, we committed to do that.

We acknowledged up front that we will cut some areas of the health care budget so we can reinvest in other areas. We pledged and committed that we would cut not one cent out of the overall health care envelope, and we have cut not one cent out of the health care envelope, exactly as we pledged.

## RURAL HEALTH SERVICES

**Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre):** My question is to the Minister of Health. This week the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Ontario released a surprising report on fatal heart disease; it found that the rural areas of this province have a significantly higher rate of death from heart attack and stroke than large cities do. The findings raise a lot more questions for all of us, and those questions are going to have to be the subject of further research. One of those questions is very particular to rural Ontario: Is there any correlation between heart disease fatality and access to emergency medical care?

Minister, the Heart and Stroke Foundation has made it clear that it doesn't have the answer to that question at this point in time, and we're quite sure you don't either. Given that agricultural areas have significantly more deaths already due to heart attacks, how can you go ahead with closing small-town and rural hospitals and their emergency departments without really knowing what impact that may have on heart disease fatalities?

**Hon David Johnson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Minister of Health, Government House Leader):** This is a troubling question. It's one that certainly concerns me a great deal. The member opposite mentioned that further studies are under way and I

certainly am very anxious to get the results of those studies. I know the Heart and Stroke Foundation is embarking upon a study this fall. The cardiac care network is reviewing this area; we're expecting information from the cardiac care network within the next short period of time. The ministry will certainly be taking a very close look at it and looking for ways and means of addressing this problem.

I will say that over the past year the ministry has invested a considerable amount in, for example, paramedic training in defibrillation techniques. Some \$16 million is starting to flow in Kent county, for example, one area of concern; some 15 defibrillators have been announced in that area. The ministry is concerned. We'll be participating in these studies and anxious for the results.

**Mrs Boyd:** That's scant comfort to the people who live in rural areas who are seeing their hospitals threatened with closure. Last night the Grey-Bruce District Health Council received a report from its health and hospital restructuring committee, a report that recommends turning the Meaford, Walkerton, Chesley and Durham hospitals into primary health centres and downgrading the Wiarton hospital. About 300 concerned citizens attended that meeting despite a horrible rain and sleet storm. They know all about driving in weather and on roads that make a joke of your guidelines that residents be within 30 minutes of emergency care, care that could save a life when someone has a heart attack.

Many rural residents believe they are being denied their rights under the Canada Health Act, that in cities people generally have a 15-minute emergency response time. They're asking, does your hospital downsizing justify this double standard for emergency service?

**Hon David Johnson:** In Grey-Bruce, a subcommittee of the district health council did report yesterday with specific recommendations. The district health council, however, has not had an opportunity to deal with that particular report. There are a number of steps along the way. People are participating. The district health council in that area is participating. It is a recommendation that is being developed in that local area and will be coming forward.

Once it goes through the district health council, I would expect probably in March, then it comes to the ministry, then it goes to the restructuring commission. There is a good deal of work to do on any recommendations coming out in Grey-Bruce. I fully expect that through that process there could well be changes, but the net result and the goal of all this through community development, through the district health councils is to develop a better standard, improved hospital care for the people of that area.

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**Mrs Boyd:** Minister, you didn't answer the question. The question is whether the people in rural Ontario can expect the same kind of emergency response times that their sisters and brothers in large urban centres can have. We know the answer is no. Rural people all over this province are saying that as you go ahead — and of course one hand doesn't know what the other hand is doing and there's this denial of any responsibility on the part of the government — what you are doing is exposing



people in rural and northern areas to health care that is substandard under the Canada Health Act, an act which, I remind you, you said you would observe. They are being treated differently than people in large urban areas. That's the question, Minister.

Would you please answer whether this development of standards is going to guarantee that emergency response times in rural and northern areas are the same as they are in large cities, and are you going to guarantee that those response times are going to end this horrible mortality rate for heart disease and stroke?

**Hon David Johnson:** What I will guarantee to the member opposite is that we will carry on with the process that your government began a number of years ago involving the district health councils. This was initiated by the NDP. Some \$26 million was plugged into the process to get it going because I suspect your government recognized, as our government recognizes, that there need to be changes to improve the health care system.

By doing this on a community level through the district health councils, the commitment is to tailor and improve in those communities the services that are available. We have embarked on that process even as this is being undertaken by announcing some \$600 million worth of reinvestments over the last year — reinvestments in dialysis treatment, in cardiac care, in defibrillators, in cancer treatment, in drug programs as well as long-term care and all the components of the health care system.

#### PROPERTY TAXATION

**Mr Rosario Marchese (Fort York):** My question is to the Minister of Housing and Municipal Affairs. Three weeks ago you announced your massive download of health and social services costs on to the municipal property taxpayer. Yesterday, using inaccurate numbers, you laughed off the catastrophic impact of a half-a-billion-dollar download on the property taxpayer of Toronto. But your mega-load is happening all over the province.

Minister, your comments lead a lot of people to believe that your \$1-billion community reinvestment fund is a fraud. A lot of people believe that you've stuck property taxpayers with over \$1 billion in costs and that the promised fund will quietly disappear. Without being flippant, if you can, will you guarantee that \$1-billion fund will go to the municipalities every year?

**Hon Al Leach (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing):** In response to the member for the third party, the \$1 billion is a real number. That number will be in the budget. That amount of funding will be available for redistribution to the municipalities for as long as it's needed. If it's needed for two years or three years or five years or 10 years, that money will be there. We've committed \$1 billion to assist municipalities that need help and we live up to our commitments, as the people of Ontario know.

**Mr Marchese:** The municipalities and property taxpayers are very worried about that. That's why we're asking the question. You have dumped a huge cost on to the taxpayers of Toronto, Hamilton, Ottawa, Niagara, Sudbury, Timmins, and the long list goes on. You want municipalities to come to you on bended knee, but worse,

I fear the money will not be there. That is my fear, and it is the fear of many municipalities. You want to snatch \$1 billion out of the hands of property taxpayers.

The region of Haldimand-Norfolk has a population of 94,000 people. You are dumping approximately \$30 million in extra costs on to the property taxpayer in that region. That's about \$750 a household. Are the good folk of Haldimand-Norfolk going to get that \$30 million every year so that you can keep your promise of no property tax increases?

**Hon Mr Leach:** I know the taxpayers of Ontario know what we're doing. We're taking \$5.4 billion off the education property tax, which is going to give them an opportunity to have the room on their property tax base to absorb the cost of the other programs that they rightly should deliver. That \$5.4 billion will grow to about \$6.2 billion by the year 2000.

What the people of Ontario know is that they can trust this party. They know that this party is not going to flip-flop like the Liberals did. They know that they can trust this party to carry out its commitments and its promises. That's why the people of Ontario know that if they need help in covering off some of the costs, that \$1 billion will be there to assist them.

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Final supplementary.

**Ms Shelley Martel (Sudbury East):** The people of the province can trust you like they trusted Mike Harris on health care. Let me tell you that in the regional municipality of Sudbury, the net cost of your dumping of social services and health care costs will be \$105 million. That represents an additional cost of \$1,600 per household across the region.

Jim Gordon, mayor of the city of Sudbury, former Conservative MPP and cabinet minister, has this to say about what you're doing: "Municipalities are forced to go after their taxpayers for money in order to support Premier Mike Harris's provincial tax break. It's just going to make people poorer, poorer and poorer because we're taking so much money out of their pockets when someone else is providing a tax cut. It's so much baloney," said Gordon.

Minister, will you assure the people in the regional municipality today that they will not have to foot this \$105-million bill and that your reinvestment fund will cover that entire cost this year, next year and every year that we have to cover it?

**Hon Mr Leach:** The people of Sudbury know that if they require assistance, we will be there to help them with that assistance. But we know that by putting actually \$2.5 billion aside to help municipalities that may require assistance — \$700 million for social services, \$800 million to help with restructuring if they need help in rebuilding roads — we will be there to provide some assistance to them. If they need assistance, that \$1 billion in funding will be available to the municipalities of Ontario.

We intend to sit down with the municipalities very shortly. We're sitting down with AMO and other major stakeholders to work out the ways and means in which that \$1 billion will be distributed to the municipalities that need it. That formula on distribution will be made known after we have full consultation, as we always do, with the municipalities.



## BAIL SUPERVISION PROGRAM

**Mr David Ramsay (Timiskaming):** I have a question for the Solicitor General and Minister of Correctional Services. I'd like to bring to your attention today another reason why the cancellation of the bail supervision program was wrong, and I think in this case dangerous.

In the past two weeks, you've been criticized about the cost-ineffectiveness of your decision, and of course that is because it's far more costly to jail somebody on bail rather than to supervise them in the community.

But I think you've also lit a time bomb here because the counts at jails have skyrocketed recently. Metro East currently has 358 beds, but Sunday night there were 517 inmates there. Metro west and the Don jail are in a similar mess. You know this is a recipe for disaster, and you have created it. When are you going to admit that your decision was wrong and very dangerous?

**Hon Robert W. Runciman (Solicitor General and Minister of Correctional Services):** This member knows as a former Minister of Correctional Services that overcrowding is not a new problem. It's one that governments of all political stripes have had over the years, but this is the first government that is doing something in a meaningful way to address that situation, especially the crowding in the greater Toronto area. The first phase of our new infrastructure program will focus on the greater Toronto region so we can relieve some of the overcrowding pressures that have existed for a significant number of years.

With respect to bail verification, all I can say is that the research that has been conducted indicated that that program was not providing any real or meaningful impact in terms of the remand counts in our institutions, and that is a fact.

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**Mr Ramsay:** Minister, it's because of your mismanagement that you're creating the overcrowding problem this time. You're adding to that because you're putting more people away than supervising them on the street.

The signs of pending disaster are really starting to show. This overcrowding is now explosive. One night last week at Metro east there was a severe assault and a beating in that area, and again this weekend. With 25% to 30% overcapacity and triple bunking in cells, not only are the violent acts among inmates becoming more common, but guards' lives are at greater risk now. You are creating a situation that could lead to a full-scale riot. When are you going to admit that the cancellation of the bail supervision program is costly and dangerous and that you are putting offenders' and guards' lives at risk?

**Hon Mr Runciman:** The member complains about us putting more people behind bars. I don't think the public at large would complain about that particular activity. In fact, I think they're tired of the record of past governments with respect to coddling criminals and are taking a much different perspective with respect to the criminal justice system.

There's no question about it: Our major concern is public safety. We are getting tough on crime. We're doing the things that former governments should have been doing but didn't do. I think if you check the public,

if you gauge the public with respect to this issue, public concern with respect to criminal activities in this province and across this country, they're very much pleased with the approach this government is taking in terms of support for police and the number of initiatives we're taking in the justice area. I think we're doing all of the right things that should have been done many years ago, which your government failed to do.

## CARDIAC SURGERY

**Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South):** My question is to the Minister of Health. I want to bring to your attention a situation that a constituent of mine finds herself in. Diane is suffering from a heart condition and has been needing surgery since June — June 4, specifically — of last year. She went to Sudbury Memorial in order to have her situation checked out and the specialists in Sudbury said: "Go home, go off work, wait for the call. You need surgery. You're in a life-threatening situation." That was June 4 of last year.

She sat at home in June, she sat at home in July, she waited for the call up to August. No phone call came. She finally decided to take the matter into her own hands because her condition was worsening. She started calling her doctor and the people at Sudbury Memorial every week to try to get admittance, to be able to get the heart surgery she needs in regard to valve replacement.

September, October, November, December, January — no phone call. She sits at home. She waits in fear. She wonders if she's going to be able to see the next day. Minister, I ask you this: Is it acceptable for a citizen of this province to have to wait that number of months to get surgery in Ontario for a life-threatening condition?

**Hon David Johnson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Minister of Health, Government House Leader):** Obviously I'm not aware of this particular case. If the member for Cochrane South would give me the details other than what he's given here in the House, I'd obviously be happy to bring it to the attention of ministry staff and look into it. I will say, though, that in cases like this, as we all know, the hospitals do a rating here.

If your question is, are the government and the ministry and am I satisfied with the existing situation in general, no, I'm not satisfied. I've indicated that. This government has put \$16 million this past year into increasing heart surgeries. Indeed there are over 1,000 — somewhere up to 2,000 — more heart surgeries planned this year than in previous years. But is the situation acceptable? No, it isn't.

I can assure you that the ministry and I will be interested in the results of the cardiac care network review and the Heart and Stroke Foundation review.

**Mr Bisson:** The problem is that more and more people in northeastern Ontario are having to suffer, having to wait for surgery because of the cutbacks you've made in the health care system. Specifically, in Sudbury you've reduced the amount of money being spent in those particular hospitals so people are having to wait a lot longer to get into surgery.

The good news in this particular situation is that she finally got an appointment yesterday. She got confirma-



tion from the specialist in Sudbury that they would schedule her. But for her to do so, she had to threaten suicide to her doctor to get admittance to Sudbury Memorial for the surgery.

I ask you this: Do people literally have to threaten to take their own lives to get themselves moved up waiting lists so they can get surgery for what is a life-threatening situation? Is that acceptable?

**Hon David Johnson:** The information I have is that waiting time for elective surgeries is increasing somewhat. In the case of urgent situations, they're dealt with immediately.

The member opposite indicates that the spending and the investments are being cut in health care. That's not true in general. That is absolutely not true. This government is committed to \$17.4 billion. In fact, in health care as a whole, this government will invest at least \$17.7 billion. We spend more per capita, about 6% more, on health care than all the other provinces on average in Canada.

Second, in terms of cardiac care, we have invested some \$16 million in paramedic training, defibrillation techniques — \$2.3 million in defibrillators — \$16 million in terms of increased funding for heart surgeries and \$2 million for cardiac stents. This government is investing in health care and this government is investing in cardiac care in the province of Ontario.

#### PUBLIC LIBRARIES

**Mr John O'Toole (Durham East):** My question is for the Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation. Each of us knows the importance of our public libraries and our volunteer boards. Recently I presented a petition in this Legislature respecting library boards in Ontario. Furthermore, I've had contact with Cynthia Mearns, the library director of Clarington, and Tony Bonanno, director of the Scugog library. I also served as a library trustee myself for many years prior to coming to Queen's Park.

Minister, I was very interested in your response to the Who Does What recommendation from Crombie. Crombie recommended the elimination of boards. You did not take this advice. Could you tell the House today the reason for your decision?

**Hon Marilyn Mushinski (Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation):** Thank you to the honourable member for Durham East for his question. The Crombie report is advice to our government and Mr Crombie did indeed recommend the total elimination of library boards. I spent over nine months in consultation with the library community, and that included municipalities, library workers and users. As a result of those consultations, there was almost unanimous agreement to retain library boards. I wholeheartedly agree with that agreement, and under my proposed new framework, municipalities that now currently fund on average 85% of library costs will be given control over local libraries as well as the responsibility for establishing the rules and membership of local library boards. Who better than the local library community and the people that live in that community to make such decisions?

**Mr O'Toole:** I'd like to thank the minister for her answer and support of library boards in Ontario. What has been the reaction to the proposed new framework for local libraries?

**Hon Ms Mushinski:** I have some responses here that I'd like to read into the record.

Verna Ross, chair of the Aurora public library board, said in a personal letter to me in January, "I think you did a marvellous job of protecting the essential underpinnings of the system, and I want to thank you."

Barry Fowler, who's the acting chair of the Windsor library board, said on CKLW Radio, "Given the changes that are happening around us, we think it is a very reasonable response from the provincial government."

Finally, in the Ottawa Citizen on January 16, Terry Mundell of AMO said he welcomes the changes and does not believe budgets will be decreased as a result.

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#### IPPERWASH PROVINCIAL PARK

**Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt):** My question is to the Premier and it has to do with the role your office played in the Ipperwash event, where a first nation person was killed and an OPP officer faces charges. It now appears, based on the information we've got, that all the key files involving your office around the major meetings on September 5, 6 and 7 have disappeared. We requested, under freedom of information, all documents, memoranda and e-mails produced by your staff regarding these meetings. We now have been informed, in a memo from the freedom of information office on January 29, that the Premier's office has neither custody nor control of any records, in response to our request for the memoranda. It is clear that the major files have disappeared.

My question is this, Premier: Did you or anyone in your office order the destruction of all the Premier's staff reports on the Ipperwash interministerial meetings of September 5, 6 and 7?

**Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier):** You make up imaginary files. You make up imaginary involvement. There were no files, there were no records, because we had no involvement.

**Mr Phillips:** Premier, you acknowledged on May 29 that your executive assistant was at these meetings. You have acknowledged that the reason the executive assistant was there was to prepare briefings for you, was to get the full information on the events taking place. These meetings took place on September 5, 6 — the day of the shooting — and 7. These were major meetings involving senior people of all ministries, you represented by your executive assistant — major, significant meetings.

We can only assume, because you've indicated it was the case, that you were briefed on those meetings. We can only assume that your senior staff prepared briefing notes. We can only assume that those briefing notes have now disappeared. They're gone. Your office has informed the freedom of information office that they're gone. That is what the freedom of information officer says.

I will say to you, Premier, it is clear that you've acknowledged in the past that briefing notes were pre-



pared. It is clear now that you are acknowledging that those notes no longer exist. My question is this: Who ordered those notes to be destroyed?

**Hon Mr Harris:** You have a wild imagination with no facts, and nothing's been destroyed.

#### METROPOLITAN TORONTO HOUSING AUTHORITY

**Mr Rosario Marchese (Fort York):** My question is to the Minister of Housing and Municipal Affairs. Today in the papers we read that you fired Don Richmond as head of the Metro Toronto Housing Authority. Don Richmond, as far as I know, was praised by politicians of all stripes when he was Metro social services commissioner. He even served as an executive officer in the Premier's office under Tory John Robarts. He later worked for Metro Chairman Paul Godfrey, another of your friends.

Mr Richmond, it seems, has a fatal flaw. He cared about the people who live in social housing. This is what he said: "Public housing was created to fill a gap. The private sector is not interested in housing people at the bottom end of society. I'm very concerned about the tenants."

Minister, are you firing this individual because he disagrees with you and because he cares for these tenants?

**Hon Al Leach (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing):** Mr Richmond was not fired at all. Mr Richmond had a two-year contract, an assignment he took on for a period of two years. That contract expires on February 28 and Mr Richmond will be going on to other challenges.

As I mentioned in the article, Mr Richmond did extremely good work for us. We don't always agree on philosophy on public housing, but he did a good job and he'll continue to do a good job as long as he's there. But he was not fired.

**Mr Marchese:** His contract obviously did not continue because he disagrees with you fundamentally. That's really what's at stake here.

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Order. Member for Fort York, order.

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker:** Order. Member for Brantford, you're out of your seat, and the member for London South, it's not helpful. As I said before, I want to hear the questions and the answers. I can't hear that question.

*Interjection.*

**The Speaker:** I'm sorry; London North. I apologize to the member for London South.

**Mr Marchese:** My view is the following: You did not extend his contract because you have fundamental disagreements about public housing. That's the real reason. Getting rid of Don Richmond, getting him out of the way opens the door to your downloading of social housing on to the municipalities. That's the agenda.

You make a big deal as well about the fact that you're going to phase in the downloading, but that doesn't change the fact that the cost to property taxpayers is going to be very high. It's just delayed.

Don Richmond says that public housing in Metro still needs over \$200 million in urgent, essential repairs. That's money you haven't counted on in your statistics but it's money that property taxpayers in Metro will have to come up with. What the Metro taxpayers are looking for is this: clarity and certainty from you. Where is Metro going to find the \$200 million it needs for essential repairs? Clarity and certainty, Minister.

**Hon Mr Leach:** There were two parts to the question. I'll repeat for the record that Mr Richmond is moving on to other challenges in the future, which is his right to do.

Mr Richmond is right. There is a tremendous need to rehabilitate much of the social housing in Metropolitan Toronto that was allowed to run down during your administration, allowed to go into wrack and ruin, with broken windows and broken pipes and everything else. We recognize that public housing has to be rehabilitated and we intend to do something about that very shortly. Stay tuned.

#### TEACHERS' PROTEST

**Mr Tim Hudak (Niagara South):** My question is to the Minister of Education. There have been several reports today that the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation is planning to take their protest campaign now into the classrooms of Ontario. Members on this side of the House are very upset about that kind of campaign going to the classrooms of Ontario.

There are many acceptable methods of political discourse: faxes, letters, petitions and phone calls, to name a few. But surely taking union politics directly into the classrooms in Ontario crosses the line. Parents tell me this method is an unacceptable politicization of the classroom, students have complained, and I suspect that the teachers I know are upset about this campaign and won't participate.

Minister, what is the ministry's position on using the classroom for union politics?

**Hon John Snobelen (Minister of Education and Training):** I regret to inform the member that we have information that the union has instructed its members that they should use union lesson plans to take their protest campaign directly to the classrooms in Ontario.

I want to assure the member that the teachers I've talked to over the course of the last few days have assured me they understand, and understand fully, their professional responsibilities and the trust and respect there is between students and teachers, and that the classroom is not an appropriate place either for a protest or to move a political argument.

I think that all parents and students and teachers in this province understand very clearly that we need to put in place clear standards and have accurate measures and work together to lift student achievement in this province to the head of the class so that our students are achieving better than any other students in Canada, and we are working together to do that. This sort of action flies in the face of our commitment.

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**Mr Hudak:** I'm sure the members on this side of the House are as concerned as I about this campaign into the classroom. I know the parents in Niagara, if this happens



in the Niagara classrooms, are very concerned about OSSTF's campaign. What are you going to say to the union officials about going into the classroom and interrupting math and science and English and religion classes to preach union politics? What is your answer?

**Hon Mr Snobelen:** Again, I think this action is regrettable. I hope the union will give it some sober second thought. I will raise the issue with Mr Manners and suggest that the union reconsider this action. I have today written to school boards, the school board association and the directors of education and asked them to make sure that they have a look at lesson plans and do a thorough review of all materials that are going into the classroom, as is their responsibility.

I want to make sure that everyone in this chamber understands that the classroom has to be kept away from protest. It is just not appropriate to have bargaining take place in a classroom. I think all members of this chamber surely understand that. I have called upon the OSSTF leadership to respect our students, our parents and particularly the professional acumen of their own members.

#### PUBLIC LIBRARIES

**Mr Michael Gravelle (Port Arthur):** My question is to the Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation. I'm glad to have the opportunity to ask you a follow-up question to the rather shameless setup you had from your colleague moments ago because the truth is that all supporters of the public library system in this province are devastated by the minister's decision to withdraw provincial funding support for our library system. I would recommend to the minister that she read some of the other letters that are coming in, the thousands upon thousands, decrying these cuts to the provincial funding system.

They're also worried because they already know we have an education minister who believes that school libraries aren't a priority either. So now we have the spectacle of a culture minister who's dumping all responsibility for funding libraries on the backs of residential property taxpayers. We have user fees which are going to mean that less-well-off children in our province are going to lose access to the new technology our libraries are developing.

This weekend the Ontario Library Association is meeting to discuss your shocking about face.

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Question.

**Mr Gravelle:** What they want to know is, where does it say in the Common Sense Revolution that the children and the millions of other library users in this province are to be deprived of access to our public libraries?

**Mr John O'Toole (Durham East):** Mr Speaker, I have a point of personal privilege.

**The Speaker:** Okay, I'll deal with it after question period.

**Hon Marilyn Mushinski (Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation):** What we said in the Common Sense Revolution was that we were going to eliminate duplication and overregulation and dual responsibility for the delivery of local services and were going to make government more accountable to the taxpayers. That's

exactly what we're doing with respect to public libraries. These changes will actually result in more effective and simpler management, something that we committed to in the Common Sense Revolution.

**Mr Gravelle:** It's clear that the minister just doesn't get it. Your reforms are simply moving us to an under-funded library system in the province. You talk about our municipalities being responsible because of the new funding reality, but how can you expect them to do this when you've dumped over \$1 billion in new financial responsibilities on local taxpayers? The representatives of the Ontario Library Association told me they tried to send that message to you last week in a meeting with you, along with many other concerns that they have, and they're the spokespeople for this, and you were oblivious to their warnings.

We all need to know how you're going to respond to the library association this year. Will you tell them that no community — big, small; urban, rural — will lose their library services and will you guarantee that no local neighbourhood library branches will be closed as a result of your actions? Will you guarantee it?

**Hon Ms Mushinski:** I will repeat exactly what the responses have been to our proposals. In an Ottawa Citizen story on January 16, 1997, Mr Mundell, the president of AMO, which is the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, said that he welcomes the changes and does not believe that budgets will be decreased as a result. Jean Dirksen, who is the former chief executive officer of the Windsor Public Library, said on December 31: "The Crombie recommendations were welcome news. They are farsighted and will enable libraries and their municipalities to bring about seriously needed change within the fiscal authority of the municipality."

#### CLOSURE OF JAILS

**Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold):** I've got a question to the Minister of Correctional Services. He has a superjail plan that just doesn't make sense. He talks about shutting down 14 correctional facilities in this province. He omitted from his list of 14 the old county bucket in Brockville — 100 years old. That, from his own riding, happened to be omitted from the list of jails to be shut down and replaced. But he included the Ontario Correctional Institute, which has internationally acknowledged treatment programs. He included for shutdown the Vanier institute, the only women's correctional facility in the province of Ontario.

He also included the Niagara Detention Centre, one of Ontario's newest correctional facilities, built in 1973, one of the most efficient, with a per diem inmate cost of only \$88, well below the provincial average. That's not common sense; that's just plain stupid. I put to the minister: How could he even think of including the Niagara Detention Centre, one of our newest and most efficient and cost-effective correctional facilities on his list of —

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Thank you, member. Minister.

**Hon Robert W. Runciman (Solicitor General and Minister of Correctional Services):** It's interesting that the member mentions the Brockville jail as not being part



of this plan, suggesting, I suppose, that there's some political decision lying behind this. I want to point out for the benefit of this member and others that Brockville is part of phase 2 and is indeed slated for closure as one of the very old jails in this province.

We're not showing preferential treatment to anyone with respect to provincial representation, unlike, I might point out, the NDP government when it was in power. I want to point out that they realized they had a problem with older jails in this province. They had recommendations before them which they failed to act upon except in two ridings held by provincial Conservative members. Those are the jails they selected to close and they ignored all the other recommendations.

**Mr Kormos:** This minister —

**Hon Noble Villeneuve (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, minister responsible for francophone affairs):** Where were you then, Peter? They had you muzzled.

**The Speaker:** Minister of Agriculture, order.

*Interjection.*

**The Speaker:** Okay, I didn't hear that, so let's continue. The member for Welland-Thorold.

**Mr Kormos:** This minister is obsessed with handing over the operation of our correctional facilities to profit-driven corporations, and the fact is that there's no conclusive evidence that that's going to save taxpayers a single penny. In fact, a Tennessee study — the minister should know about it — indicates that in a comparison of inmate costs between private and public facilities there is very little difference.

This minister is going to close down, as I have indicated, some of the most effective treatment programs, some of the most efficient and newest jails that this province has. He's going to hand the operation of corrections over to companies that make profits from filling jails which therefore will have little interest in avoiding recidivism, or people returning to jails. It will be motivated to have more people in jails.

Why is the minister risking community safety, the safety of correctional officers and the safety of inmates, and the accountability of the prison system, by handing over our correctional services to private corporations?

**Hon Mr Runciman:** If this government and this minister's obsessed with anything, it's bringing common sense back to government, and that applies to the corrections system as well, where we've had a system where we are paying far and away the highest costs in terms of incarceration of any province in this country, an average of \$124 a day. It costs less to stay in a hotel in downtown Toronto than it costs the taxpayers of this province to house inmates across our institutions.

We have the oldest infrastructure in Canada, many facilities over 100 years of age. The member mentioned some facilities. We're also dealing with the federal authorities with respect to keeping some of those institutions open for alternative uses.

They raise the spectre of safety. The new institutions that we are building under phase 1 and phase 2 will be maximum security institutions. Public safety is priority number one.

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## REPORT, COMMISSION ON ELECTION FINANCES

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** I beg to inform the House I have today laid upon the table the Twentieth Indemnity and Allowances Report of the Commission on Election Finances.

Motions?

*Interjection.*

**The Speaker:** I apologize; you're right. The member for Durham East on a point of privilege.

**Mr John O'Toole (Durham East):** It concerns my attempt to ensure that I am not impugned. The member for Port Arthur, in his question to our Minister of Citizenship and Culture, implied somehow that my question was a setup or somehow illegitimate. This is the very point in these proceedings that all —

*Interjections.*

**Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold):** O'Toole, what did they tell you? How stupid are you?

**The Speaker:** Members opposite. Members. The member for Welland-Thorold, please. All members have a right to raise a point of privilege, and I know when all members on this side stand, I insist that I hear the point of privilege. Please allow him to put it. Member for Durham East.

**Mr O'Toole:** Really, this is the point in the proceedings every day where all members are allowed to ask questions of the minister. I just want the shallow attempt by the member to disqualify my attempt to ask a sincere and initiated question on my side — I am working for my constituents of Durham East and I want my constituents to know that.

**The Speaker:** Just a moment, member for Beaches-Woodbine.

What is your point of privilege?

**Mr O'Toole:** Somehow the member for Port Arthur was impugning my motives or the legitimacy of —

**The Speaker:** All right. Did you want to rise on that? Member for Beaches-Woodbine.

**Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine):** Just to say, in response to the member's point of privilege, I think he was referring to the fact that there had been an accusation that it was a setup question and that's what he was objecting to. I think there is an easy way to resolve that. If you'd just get the minister to stop reading the prepared answer to your prepared question, we wouldn't think it was set up.

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker:** Order. I think that's just a comment the member for Port Arthur made. It's a comment the member for Port Arthur made —

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker:** I think he was passing his opinion, and opinions are in order in this place. If it was his opinion that your question was prepared, I hardly expect you to have the Speaker start reprimanding members for suggesting some are prepared questions, some aren't. Although I understand what you're saying, I don't really believe it's a point of privilege.



## PETITIONS

### HOTEL DIEU HOSPITAL

**Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines):** I have a petition very relevant this week to the government of Ontario.

"Since the Hotel Dieu Hospital has played and continues to play a vital role in the delivery of health care services in St Catharines and the Niagara region;

"Since Hotel Dieu has modified its role over the years as part of a rationalization of medical services in St Catharines and has assumed the position of a regional health care facility in such areas as kidney dialysis and oncology;

"Since the Niagara region is experiencing underfunding in the health care field and requires more medical services and not fewer services; and

"Since Niagara residents are required at present to travel outside of the Niagara region to receive many specialized services that could be provided in city hospitals and thereby not require local patients to make difficult and inconvenient trips down our highways to other centres;

"Since the Niagara hospital restructuring committee used a Toronto consulting firm to develop its recommendations and was forced to take into account a cut of \$44 million in funding for Niagara hospitals when carrying out its study; and

"Since the population of the Niagara region is older than that in most areas of the province and more elderly people tend to require more hospital services;

"We, the undersigned, request that the government of Ontario keep the election commitment of Premier Mike Harris not to close hospitals in our province, and we call upon the Premier to reject any recommendation to close Hotel Dieu Hospital in St Catharines."

I affix my signature to this petition as I'm in full agreement with its contents.

### ONTARIO CORRECTIONAL INSTITUTE

**Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine):** This petition is to the Legislature of Ontario.

"We, the undersigned, believe that helping reduce crime and abuse in our communities is our responsibility as employees of the Ministry of Correctional Services, as professionals in related fields and as concerned citizens;

"Closing institutions which provide specialized services to women and treatment to men does not achieve that goal;

"Physical, emotional and sexual abuse is often transmitted from one generation to the next, with tremendous cost to society;

"Treatment aimed at breaking that cycle must include the abuser so that another generation of children is not raised with the same destructive lessons;

"As Mr Ross Virgo has stated, the Ontario Correctional Institute is 'a therapeutic community known around the world for their techniques';

"Research statistics support anecdotal evidence that we are effective in changing abusive behaviour;

"A therapeutic community cannot exist in a super-prison;

"Save victims and money by keeping what works open."

I've affixed my signature to that.

### CLASS SIZE

**Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury):** This petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the private member's bill introduced by Rick Bartolucci, MPP for the riding of Sudbury, limits the number of pupils that may be enrolled in a class in a school in Ontario; and

"Whereas this limit depends on the grade level of the class; and

"Whereas studies have concluded that there are clear benefits from smaller class sizes; and

"Whereas there is greater student involvement and interaction; and

"Whereas there is improved student performance; and

"Whereas there is the opportunity for greater individualization; and

"Whereas smaller class sizes allow for a more varied and constructive education for students;

"Therefore, we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support this private member's bill as it enhances classroom education."

I affix my signature to this petition of several thousand names.

### MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

**Mr John L. Parker (York East):** I have a petition signed by a number of East York residents, including John Withrow, Wayne Swallow and Shelley Davis. It reads simply as follows:

"We, the undersigned, residents of East York, are in favour of the borough of East York remaining as a separate municipality."

### ONTARIO CORRECTIONAL INSTITUTE

**Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands):** I have a petition here which is addressed to the Legislature and to the Honourable Robert Runciman, and it states as follows:

"We, the undersigned, believe that helping reduce crime and abuse in our communities is our responsibility as employees of the Ministry of Correctional Services, as professionals in related fields and as concerned citizens;

"Closing institutions which provide specialized services to women and treatment to men does not achieve that goal;

"Physical, emotional and sexual abuse is often transmitted from one generation to the next, with tremendous cost to society;

"Treatment aimed at breaking that cycle must include the abuser so that another generation of children is not raised with the same destructive lessons;

"As Mr Ross Virgo has stated, the Ontario Correctional Institute is 'a therapeutic community known around the world for their techniques';



"Research statistics support anecdotal evidence that we are effective in changing abusive behaviour;

"A therapeutic community cannot exist in a super-prison.

"Save victims and money by keeping what works open."

They've requested that everyone who signs this petition respond as well to the Solicitor General, and I have affixed my signature to it.

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## ABORTION

**Mr Gerry Martiniuk (Cambridge):** I have a petition from hundreds of the good citizens of Cambridge, and it reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas induced abortion is the intentional medical killing of a pre-born human being before birth, and evidence that pre-born human beings of five to six weeks' gestation have the ability to experience pain has been reported as long ago as 1941 and corroborated as recently as 1994;

"Whereas a recent study reviewing all available research on the reasons for abortion in Canada concluded that, 'As the procedure is not therapeutic, and as there is mounting evidence that it is harmful to women's health, funding by the government under health care cannot be justified';

"Whereas US studies have shown that where public funding for abortion has been removed, both the pregnancy rate and the abortion rate have dropped significantly;

"Whereas the Canada Health Act does not require that 'elective procedures' be funded, nor has any Canadian court ever found a constitutional right to publicly fund abortion;

"Whereas it is the responsibility and the authority of the province exclusively to determine what services will be insured;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ontario government remove induced abortion from its medically insured services; and

"That the Ontario government, through the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Community and Social Services, endeavour to encourage an alliance between all groups offering crisis pregnancy support across the province."

Pursuant to the standing orders, I sign the petition on the face of it.

## CLASS SIZE

**Mr Frank Miclash (Kenora):** I have a petition that's directed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, which reads:

"Whereas the private member's bill introduced by Rick Bartolucci, MPP for the riding of Sudbury, limits the number of pupils that may be enrolled in a class in a school in Ontario; and

"Whereas this limit depends on the grade level of the class; and

"Whereas studies have concluded that there are clear benefits from smaller class sizes; and

"Whereas there is greater student involvement and interaction; and

"Whereas there is improved student performance; and

"Whereas there is an opportunity for greater individualization; and

"Whereas smaller class sizes allow for a more varied and constructive education for students;

"Therefore, we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support this private member's bill as it enhances classroom education."

I have attached my name to that petition as well.

## ABORTION

**Mr John O'Toole (Durham East):** It's my pleasure to present a petition to the Parliament of Ontario.

"Whereas pregnancy is not a disease, injury or illness; and

"Whereas abortion is not therapeutic; and

"Whereas abortion is never medically necessary; and

"Whereas the Canada Health Act does not require 'elective procedures' to be funded; and

"Whereas there is no right to publicly funded abortion; and

"Whereas it is the responsibility and the authority of the province exclusively to determine what services will be insured; and

"Whereas there is mounting evidence that abortion is hazardous to women's health; and

"Whereas the availability of abortion at public expense leads to the use of abortion as a means of birth control; and

"Whereas Ontario taxpayers funded 45,014 abortions in 1993 at an estimated cost of \$25 million;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ontario provincial government remove abortion as a service or procedure covered under the provincial health insurance plan."

I sign my name to this petition.

## CLASS SIZE

**Mr Michael Gravelle (Port Arthur):** "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the private member's bill introduced by Rick Bartolucci, MPP for the riding of Sudbury, limits the number of pupils that may be enrolled in a class in a school in Ontario; and

"Whereas this limit depends on the grade level of the class; and

"Whereas studies have concluded that there are clear benefits from smaller class sizes; and

"Whereas there is greater student involvement and interaction; and

"Whereas there is improved student performance; and

"Whereas there is an opportunity for greater individualization; and

"Whereas smaller class sizes allow for a more varied and constructive education for students;



"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support this private member's bill as it enhances classroom education."

I am proud to sign my name to it.

#### HIGHWAY 17

**Mr Bill Murdoch (Grey-Owen Sound):** I have a petition from the town of Thessalon.

"We, the undersigned residents of the town of Thessalon in the district of Algoma, would like to extend our appreciation to the Minister of Transportation, the Honourable Al Palladini, and the Minister of Northern Development and Mines, the Honourable Chris Hodgson, for their commitment to northern Ontario, and in particular to the district of Algoma, for road improvements to Highway 17 from Sault Ste Marie to Bruce Mines.

"As part of this commitment to northern Ontario, we request that the road construction be continued in an east direction so that years of neglect to our highway system can be rectified."

It's signed by many petitioners from there.

#### FIRE SAFETY

**Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury):** This is a petition in response to Bill 84.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the firefighters of Sudbury, Thunder Bay and Ontario are very concerned about Bill 84;

"Whereas we feel Bill 84 is unfair;

"Whereas we feel Bill 84 is discriminatory;

"Whereas we feel Bill 84 endangers the wellbeing of the people of Ontario;

"Whereas we feel Bill 84 requires extensive changes;

"Whereas we feel Bill 84 needs broad provincial public hearings before implementation; and

"Whereas we are concerned and we don't want to get burned by Bill 84;

"We, the undersigned, therefore petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to demand the Solicitor General to rewrite Bill 84 before being enacted into law and only after extensive public hearings across Ontario."

I affix my name to this petition.

#### HIGHWAY 17

**Mr Bill Murdoch (Grey-Owen Sound):** I have now another petition from the township of Plummer.

"We, the undersigned residents of the township of Plummer in the district of Algoma would like to extend our appreciation to the Minister of Transportation, the Honourable Al Palladini, and the Minister of Northern Development and Mines, the Honourable Chris Hodgson, for their commitment to northern Ontario, and in particular the district of Algoma, for road improvements to Highway 17 from Sault Ste Marie to Bruce Mines.

"This is the first major road improvement in over 10 years in our area, and we, as residents of Algoma, salute the minister."

#### NATIVE RETAIL SALES TAX EXEMPTION

**Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin):** I have a petition that's signed by numerous people from the Wikwemikong Unceded First Nation.

"Whereas the government of Ontario's list of PST-exempt purchases regarding native Indians presently discriminates against Ontario Indians living off reserves because of educational purposes, medical reasons or unsettled land claims;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to pass amending legislation to allow Indians living off reserves for educational purposes, medical reasons and unsettled land claims to be included in the PST exemption policy."

#### HIGHWAY 17

**Mr Allan K. McLean (Simcoe East):** I have a petition here.

"We, the undersigned residents of the town of Bruce Mines in the district of Algoma would like to extend our gratitude and sincere thanks to the Minister of Transportation, the Honourable Al Palladini, and the Minister of Northern Development and Mines, the Honourable Chris Hodgson, for the road improvements to Highway 17 from Sault Ste Marie to Bruce Mines.

"This is the first major road improvement in over 10 years in our area, and we, as residents of Algoma, salute you both for your commitment to the north and our highway system.

#### PUBLIC LIBRARIES

**Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands):** I have a petition here signed by 129 people on separate cards that read as follows:

"We support free public libraries as the foundation of a literate, informed and prosperous population.

"I am therefore opposed to the repeal of the Public Libraries Act, also opposed to the elimination of provincial conditional grants to public libraries and the eradication of library boards and the imposition of fees for the use of public libraries."

This petition is on 129 separate cards and I am glad to affix my name to it.

#### FIRE SAFETY

**Mr Michael Gravelle (Port Arthur):** "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the firefighters of Thunder Bay, Sudbury, Kenora and the rest of Ontario are very concerned about Bill 84;

"Whereas we feel Bill 84 is unfair;

"Whereas we feel Bill 84 is discriminatory;

"Whereas we feel Bill 84 endangers the wellbeing of the people of Ontario;

"Whereas we feel Bill 84 requires extensive changes;

"Whereas we feel Bill 84 needs broad provincial public hearings before implementation;

"We, the undersigned, therefore petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to demand the Solicitor General to



rewrite Bill 84 before being enacted into law and only after extensive public hearings across Ontario."

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## REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

### STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

**Mr Floyd Laughren (Nickel Belt):** I beg leave to present the 31st report of the standing committee on government agencies.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley):** Mr Laughren presents the committee's 31st report. Does the honourable Chair wish to make a brief statement?

**Mr Laughren:** No.

**The Acting Speaker:** Pursuant to standing order 106(g)(11), the report is deemed to be adopted by the House.

## INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

### LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO FOUNDATION ACT, 1997

#### LOI DE 1997 SUR LA FONDATION DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mr Leadston moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 123, An Act to establish the Legislative Assembly of Ontario Foundation / Projet de loi 123, Loi créant la Fondation de l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley):** Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

**Mr Gary L. Leadston (Kitchener-Wilmot):** The purpose of this bill is for the establishment of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario Foundation. The objects of the foundation are to solicit, receive and to manage money for the purpose of maintaining and restoring the Legislative Building and the Whitney Block.

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

### WATER AND SEWAGE SERVICES IMPROVEMENT ACT, 1997

#### LOI DE 1997 SUR L'AMÉLIORATION DES SERVICES D'EAU ET D'ÉGOUT

Mr Galt, on behalf of Mr Sterling, moved second reading of Bill 107, An Act to enact the Municipal Water and Sewage Transfer Act, 1997 and to amend other acts with respect to water and sewage / Projet de loi 107, Loi visant à édicter la Loi de 1997 sur le transfert des installations d'eau et d'égout aux municipalités et modifiant d'autres lois en ce qui a trait à l'eau et aux eaux d'égout.

**Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland):** It's certainly a pleasure for me to be able to speak on behalf of Minister Sterling on Bill 107, the Water and Sewage Services Improvement Act.

Ontario's water and sewage infrastructure ranks among the very best in the world. The people of this province have long relied upon top-quality services. They expect and will accept no less in the future. This government is committed to finding the best ways to ensure that this expectation is met by finding the most efficient way to run our water and sewage systems. This is indeed especially important at a time when all levels of government face the challenge of maintaining high-quality services without increasing the burden on the taxpayer.

Today I am pleased to move for second reading a piece of legislation, Bill 107, that will help to ensure that Ontarians continue to enjoy the highest quality of water and sewage services. Minister Sterling introduced the bill known as the Water and Sewage Services Improvement Act last month, pursuant to recommendations in December by the Who Does What panel, chaired by David Crombie.

The amendments it proposes serve the people of Ontario by both clarifying the role of government and improving accountability. Bill 107 proposes giving Ontario municipalities full title to provincially owned water and sewage treatment plants serving their communities. Bill 107 also proposes appropriately transferring responsibility to municipalities for septic system inspections and for their approvals.

Municipalities have already shown that they can deliver outstanding water and sewage treatment services to their communities. They currently own three quarters of the treatment facilities in the province of Ontario and, with the passage of Bill 107, they will be the sole level of government that holds title to water and sewage plants in the province.

It is very important to note that we are not forcing ownership on to unwilling recipients — far from it. Many local governments have told us that they want us to move in this direction. About 50 municipalities have requested title to water and sewage facilities, and we are responding to this request, to this demand in St Marys, to give you one example, Waterloo region to give you a second.

Divested of title to plants, the province would no longer be in the ambiguous position of being the regulator, the owner, the operator and the funder of these very essential services. This legislation would allow municipalities to deliver water and sewage services, as most do now, and to have the flexibility to choose an operator that will best serve their needs. Fewer levels of government administration means increased efficiency and decreased cost to the taxpayer. It will make our water and sewage systems operate more efficiently so that safe, drinkable water will continue to be provided well into the future.

The provincial government would then be able to focus on its most important role, that of setting and enforcing tough performance standards for the operation of water and sewage treatment plants. As a matter of simple fiscal responsibility, municipalities that propose to sell part or all of their waterworks to the private sector would be required by this legislation to repay any provincial capital grants received since 1978. This would protect the taxpayers' best interests and investment and encourage continued public control of water and sewage works.



Under the amended legislation, municipalities would also become formally responsible on October 1, 1997, for septic system inspections and approvals. They would have the ability to include new or expanded septic systems with a one-stop approvals service. We intend to ensure that public health and the environment are protected through tough rules for septic system installation and for their operation. Those doing this kind of work will have to meet competency requirements that will be set through provincial regulation.

People need the assurance, for example, that the inspectors are knowledgeable and competent, that their advice can be relied upon. We will use the transition period between now and October, when the Water and Sewage Services Improvement Act would take effect, as a time for training to ensure that inspectors meet the highest standards of professionalism. The toughened training and certification requirements for installers and inspectors have added benefits for homeowners. I'd like to read you a quote from Aubrey LeBlanc, the CEO responsible for the Ontario New Home Warranty Program. He said, "The new requirement for training and certification of installers and inspectors will provide greater protection for both the environment and the homeowner."

Homeowners would be better protected through increased professionalism in the field. They would get better value for their dollar. More reliable septic systems mean lower long-term maintenance costs. This increased dependability is also expected to lead to reduced insurance rates for new homes built with septic systems. In addition, the government is exploring ways to help smaller municipalities with specific needs or challenges to continue to meet Ontario's environmental protection and public health standards. Details will be provided in the next few months.

Some water and sewage works service more than just one municipality, which means they are jointly responsible for the debts.

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Some water and sewage works service more than just one municipality, which means that they are jointly responsible for the debts. In the case of these arrangements, called area plans, the works will be transferred to the serviced municipalities by way of a shared ownership agreement. Shortly after promulgation of this bill, area plan municipalities would be provided with a proposed order specifying the terms of the management structure. They can work from these model agreements, or if they have alternative proposals, these will of course be welcomed.

By way of the proposed amendments to part VIII of the Environmental Protection Act, municipalities or their agents would be responsible for the delivery of the septic system inspection and approvals program, beginning October 1, 1997. The Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing would administer the program in the unorganized areas in this province.

This will mean that residents of all municipalities across this province will receive a seamless level of service delivery. To date, this has not been the case.

Just as the province will continue to set and enforce environmental and health standards for the operation of

water and sewage treatment plants, so will we continue to set tough rules for septic system installation and operation to protect public health and the environment. Restructuring these services would improve the way that they are delivered so that the taxpayer receives value, the best possible service with optimum efficiency and least cost.

Higher-quality work would also of course mean better protection for the environment. This remains the most important goal of Bill 107.

Water and sewage services have to date had confused ownership and fragmented administration. Bill 107 clarifies and untangles the roles of provincial and municipal governments in water and sewage services. Clear and consistent assignment of responsibility will result in better delivery and increased accountability. It is a better deal for the taxpayer.

These initiatives are designed to save the taxpayer money by ending administrative overlap without compromising the quality of the services themselves. Municipalities have clearly shown that they are able and responsible in delivering quality services to their constituents.

This government is committed to ensuring that Ontario's high standards of environmental protection are maintained and, wherever possible, improved upon. I am confident that Bill 107 will enable the ministry to become more efficient and effective, while also ensuring that Ontarians enjoy the greatest protection possible of their health and their environment.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley):** Comments or questions?

**Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands):** Certainly, listening to the parliamentary assistant you would think that this is all good news to municipalities. Unfortunately, it isn't so, because it's interesting what the Association of Municipalities of Ontario has to say about this. They say that the transfer — and by the way, the transfer is not negotiable. Municipalities are going to get ownership of these older plants whether they like it or not, and some of these plants go back to the 1950s and 1960s.

This is going to be forced on municipalities and the Association of Municipalities of Ontario states that the high cost of servicing the plant debts will undoubtedly be a huge fiscal pressure on those municipalities that are forced to do so, in addition to everything else that's already been forced on them during the mega-week. Municipalities may now not have the resources to assume the cost of operating these plants and, I may add, of upgrading the plants as need be because, as I stated before, many of these plants were built in the 1950s and 1960s. As a result, AMO feels municipalities may have to reduce services, allow plants to deteriorate and dramatically raise the cost of water and sewer services.

Let's hear what the Ontario Municipal Water Association, a group that represents about 220 drinking water plants already owned by municipalities, has to say. They are very concerned that municipalities will either want to sell off their plants — and by the way, there's no provision in the bill that eliminates that. We will be moving an amendment at the appropriate time stating that municipalities will not be allowed to sell off these plants to the private sector.



The OMWA goes on to say that to cover the additional responsibilities, municipalities will either want to sell off their plants or be forced to sell them to cover the additional responsibilities dumped on them by the Tories. As a matter of fact, they released a poll showing that 75% of Ontarians supported public ownership of water systems. We want to make sure it remains that way. We also want to make sure that those smaller municipalities that will be forced to take over these systems will have sufficient resources made available to them by the province when capital repairs are required.

**Mr John O'Toole (Durham East):** It's a pleasure to get up today and support my colleague from Northumberland, Mr Galt, the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Environment and Energy, on second reading of Bill 107, the water and sewage improvement act, which will come into effect October 1, 1997.

Really, as Mr Galt said, the purpose here is to maintain the high quality of water and sewage access for the people of Ontario, which includes public health. The Ontario municipalities will receive full title to facilities. I think this is long overdue. It's another form of disentanglement. In fact, you might know that today about three quarters of them are already owned by municipalities, so there's a great opportunity here to streamline and clarify exactly how things are organized and run in this province.

Transferring responsibilities for the inspection and installation of septic tanks is long overdue. The bureaucratic way it is being handled today and the approval process itself are rather unclear. Again in that whole area we're going to improve the inspection. Installers will have access to new and tougher updates of training and certification, which is long overdue for those communities that use the private sewage treatment systems.

This bill allows a clear opportunity to disentangle the previous provisions of service and the operation of sewage and water treatment for the people of Ontario.

Just to wrap up, I think the member for Northumberland has clearly outlined an opportunity for Ontario to move forward in the most cost-effective, efficient way to provide high-quality water and sewage treatment for the people of Ontario.

**Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines):** The bill of course is about two things: It's about dumping responsibility on municipalities, and second, it's about privatization. If there is a third, it would be about lessening environmental regulation rather than increasing it.

The government puts this in a little package and hands out the information to the members and tries to pretend that what is actually happening is that it's going to increase environmental vigilance. It's exactly the opposite. This government is moving in exactly the opposite direction and it's doing it to curry favour with those who have always hated the Ministry of Environment. There are people out there, I assure you, who dislike the Ministry of Environment intently because it used to get in their way of doing the kind of business they wanted to do that was detrimental to the province, detrimental to the people of this province.

Good corporate citizens never worried about that. Good corporate citizens supported the Ministry of Environment.

It was a leveller, if you will. First of all, they were citizens who wanted a good, clean environment in Ontario, and second, they knew there were bad actors out there who needed some regulation and some supervision.

Anybody who saw the program on The 5th Estate about the privatization of water systems will recognize what has happened in Britain and all the difficulties that come with this privatization. I know this government worships at the altar of privatization. It's an ideological response in this case, not common sense, not practical the way the previous Conservative government would have been. In this case, it's strictly ideological. That's what this is all about, and what will suffer will be the environment of this province. Make no mistake about it; that's what this agenda is. This bill fits in to that particular agenda.

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**Mr David Tilson (Dufferin-Peel):** The comments made by the parliamentary assistant, the member for Northumberland, I think are appreciated by all sides of the House. One comment that I'd like to particularly comment on is that with respect to septic systems. I think this is an issue that a number of governments over the years have looked at, how to toughen up the requirements for septic systems. If you live in a rural area or you live in cottage country, that whole topic of the septic systems and how it affects the environment, how it affects the homeowner is long overdue. So I congratulate the Minister of Environment and his parliamentary assistant for announcing that there will be tougher standards with respect to the installation of newer septic systems.

I can tell you that people in my riding, many of which are under septic systems, and areas in cottage country are certainly concerned as to the effect that faulty septic systems are having on our environment. I think the fact that there will be tougher standards will result in a number of things. Not only will it help the environment, but it will be an added boon to the homeowner with respect to tougher standards for the maintenance costs with respect to the septic systems.

There is a further area. There has been some indication that it's possible that insurance rates with respect to homes may have a downward climb or downward —

**Mr Bradley:** That's a real stretch.

**Mr Tilson:** I'm not so sure. You say it's a real stretch, the member for St Catharines, but it has been indicated by some insurance companies, particularly with the fear of the defective septic systems around the province, that if these standards are tougher and if the septic systems are going to be constructed in a more efficient and better way, the rates will fall. So congratulations to the member for Northumberland.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you. Member for Northumberland.

**Mr Galt:** Thanks to the member for Durham East and also the member for Dufferin-Peel for their kind comments. I also have to admit that, going back, I didn't realize that it was an MOE responsibility in my area of the ministry. The health unit looked after septic systems, and after joining as parliamentary assistant, I started to find out, heavens, it's conservation authorities, it's private, it's health units, and overseen by the Ministry of



Environment. This is going to clarify and sort out an awful lot of that confusion.

I notice the member for Kingston and The Islands made reference to the good news. Certainly there's a lot of good news in this particular bill. I'd point out that he seemed to miss the point on the tax, that the provincial government is taking over the education tax on residential property and the intent is all about being revenue-neutral. They just seem to be missing that point and they want to talk about this downloading all the time. It seems a tough one to get clarified for them.

I do want to point out to them one of the comments that David Crombie made, and that was how much municipal politicians lobby to get money to build infrastructure. In the case he pointed out, they built such a large sewage treatment plant that in the end the municipality couldn't afford to run it. They had to come back to the provincial government to get grants and subsidy so they could actually operate the oversized plant that they so effectively lobbied for and got money for, and built it so big that they couldn't afford to operate it.

That's the kind of thing we want to get rid of. We want the local municipality to be responsible, to be fiscally responsible, and recognize the actual size that they need and build plants accordingly. This bill, by giving the ownership to the local municipality, making them responsible, will accomplish that, even though the member for St Catharines doesn't quite understand.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, your time is up. Further debate?

**Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East):** I would like to ask consent to split my time in response with the member for St Catharines.

**The Acting Speaker:** Is there consent? Agreed.

**Mr Agostino:** When you look at Bill 107 and you look simply at what the government has put out and you see it in isolation, it sounds like a neat, nicely packaged, innocent piece of legislation that, in effect, does what the government believes municipalities would like to have done. When you look at Bill 107 and the way it has been packaged and sold by this government, it seems like a great move. But this is all part of the approach that this government has taken in dealing with the environment. This has all been part of the strategy since this government took office to dismantle, destroy and reduce any government involvement in the environment in this province.

Bill 107 cannot be looked at in isolation. Bill 107 cannot be looked at simply in the context of the three or four or five pages that the legislation has in place. How Bill 107 has to be looked at is in the context of megaweek. It has to be looked at in the context of the most massive downloading that has occurred in the history of this province by this government in the last couple of weeks. It has to be looked at in the context of Bill 26 that allows municipalities now to take certain action regarding water and sewage plants that they could not do in the past.

When you look at Bill 107, it really becomes an issue of not simply transferring the other 25% of the sewage and water plants and works to municipalities across Ontario. What it becomes is a clear opportunity and

endorsement of municipalities having the ability, the power and the need, I believe, to sell their sewer and water assets.

Let's distinguish clearly. There is a difference between municipalities that choose to allow a private company to come in and operate the facilities and one that will choose to allow a private company to come in and own the facilities and, therefore, have control, most importantly, of the rates and the standards that are being set. Bill 107 allows that clear opportunity for municipalities across this province to do that.

The downloading that has occurred on to municipalities, the dumping that has occurred on to municipalities in the last few weeks put many municipalities across the province in serious financial jeopardy, a financial situation that municipalities have never faced in the history of this province. My own municipality of Hamilton-Wentworth will face a shortfall of \$121 million — that is one example — Sudbury \$105 million, Metro Toronto in the range of \$380 million, and the list goes on and on.

You have put municipalities in a state of financial crisis. You have put municipalities in a situation where their choice is going to be to increase taxes dramatically in most municipalities, and municipal politicians know that can't be done because taxpayers cannot afford to pay any more municipal property taxes. If municipalities don't take that option, they face the option of increasing user fees for everything: bus transportation, public rinks, swimming pools, golf courses, garbage pickup, every service being provided.

That's the second option. You can either increase taxes or you can put user fees, which are basically a back-door approach to taxation. Any way you look at it, this government has become an expert at that. They meant to use user fees across the board in many areas but claim that's not a tax. It is a tax, and people who pay those user fees, like senior citizens, \$2 a shot for a prescription, know that, know it's a tax as a result of your government's efforts on their backs. You will see that same option being utilized at the municipal level.

The third option that municipalities have is to cut services dramatically. Again, many municipalities have bit the bullet in the last three, four or five years and not cut services, have slimmed administration, have cut services that were not seen as important although necessary. That effort has already happened.

What is left? When you eliminate the option of increasing property taxes, when you eliminate the option of bringing in user fees, when you eliminate the option of massive reduction in services, you're left with only one option, and that is to look at services or operations that the municipality now has that you can sell off and maybe allow the private sector to do them.

When you look at municipal services, there are not many that are revenue makers for the private sector. There are going to be very few companies interested in purchasing the Hamilton Street Railway or the TTC or many other subsidized transportation systems across this province. Bus service, transportation service is seen as an essential service in municipalities, and governments over the years, with the exception of this government, have realized the need to fund those essential services.



In most communities like Hamilton-Wentworth and others across Ontario, people who use the bus service don't use it out of choice. People in Hamilton often don't use HSR out of choice. They usually use that system as a result of necessity. They can't afford to run a car, they can't afford parking, they may not be able to afford insurance, they're seniors, they can't drive for whatever reason. So it's an essential service. We have seen that. Very few companies are going to be interested in purchasing from the municipalities or running a bus system.

Social services is out; health is out. There are very few moneymakers.

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There is one potential moneymaker here. That is water and sewer. First of all, it is essential. No one in any community across this province can go on without water or sewer services. We need water; it's a necessity of life. Therefore, people will be forced to pay whatever is necessary or whatever is charged to them, because you can't do without that service. So when you look at all the options, municipalities will be faced with the opportunity, and possibly the lack of choice, to look at selling and privatizing their assets, their infrastructure for water and sewer services.

What does Bill 107 do to address that? It gives it a bit of a token effort to make it look good. It's all part of the spin, the public relations effort. The whiz kids in the Premier's office say: "How do we counter the reality now that municipalities will be forced to sell off water and sewer services and the assets in order to deal with the massive dumping that has occurred? We're going to state in legislation that the municipalities have to pay back to the government the grants that were given to them to build those facilities."

I can tell you that water and sewer service is a big business and there will be a lineup miles long for private sector companies to come into any municipality across this province and buy those facilities, and they'd be more than happy to pay the municipalities the cost of provincial grants, the funds that were given to municipalities. It's going to be a small cost of operation, the \$30 million or \$40 million or \$50 million for these companies in the private sector to come in and take over a water or sewer operation in a municipality. It will be peanuts. They will be glad to pay that to the municipality, and the municipality will pay it to the province. So it really is a token smokescreen that you've put in legislation.

We've seen the British experience with privatizing water and sewer services. We've seen rates in Britain that have gone on average from \$96 per household in 1988 to \$460 per household in 1995. That has been the British experience with privatization of water and sewer services.

What one cannot understand is why this government, when introducing Bill 107, would not look at the question of prohibiting municipalities from selling these assets. If you're so sure that municipalities are not going to do it, if you're so sure that it's a bad move by municipal governments to sell water and sewer infrastructure, and more importantly the ability to set the rates through the private sector, why would you not bring in legislation that would do so? What is the harm in that? The minister certainly seems convinced that it's a bad idea. Let me

quote Norm Sterling, December 4: "I don't think any municipality would be foolish enough to privatize, because I don't think that's where the general public are in terms of those kinds of assets."

The minister tells us it's foolish. The minister tells us the public would not like that. Why would the minister then not bring in legislation to prohibit that? What is the agenda here? Is the agenda to simply remove that 25% of the services of water and sewer facilities that are now operated under provincial jurisdiction, or is the agenda here to open the door for your friends in the private sector to operate and run and make a ton of money at the expense of taxpayers and senior citizens and the disabled and hardworking Ontarians, based on the ability to own and control the flow of water and sewer services to their homes and charge whatever rate they want?

I would appreciate someone from the government side of the House in their response or somehow through this debate to outline to me what rationale there would be for not putting such a provision in legislation. You could avoid all of this problem. You have the power through legislation to force municipalities to hang on and operate the services. If that is your agenda, if truly your agenda is affordable, clean, safe drinking water for Ontarians, then that simple amendment in your legislation would do so. It would meet that criterion.

But that is not the case. That is not the case because your friends in the private sector who have lobbied for this for years and years unsuccessfully through former Tory governments, through former Liberal governments, through former NDP governments don't like that. They want that ability. They're going to want that power to own those facilities, because you can make a ton of money. Shareholders will be happy. People who work at the Toronto Stock Exchange and the New York Stock Exchange will be the happiest people in the world when you allow the privatization of water and sewer to go on in Ontario.

How does Bill 26 fit into this? It fits in very simply. Under Bill 26 you have eliminated the need for municipalities to hold referendums before selling off water or other public facilities. Before Bill 26, because previous governments realized the importance and how vital water and sewer services are to people, there was a provision that said you can't sell water and sewer infrastructure, facilities and rates without going to a referendum. But you have eliminated that, so you've clearly opened the door.

When you look at the backdrop of all of this, you look at a government that since it has come to office has basically dumped hundreds of millions and billions of dollars on to municipal taxpayers. You look at a government that has gone out of its way to privatize absolutely everything that moves and breathes and makes dust, and you look at a government that through Bill 26 has cleared the path and opened the door for total control for municipalities to operate or to sell water and sewer assets across Ontario and the setting of the rates. You look at that and you see clearly what the agenda is. The agenda is very clearly that when it comes to the environment and when it comes to essential services in this province, the private sector's ability to make money through this government's efforts takes precedence over the public need.



A member of the government can maybe assure us in the opposition and ensure the people of Ontario that not one municipality will sell its assets, because you have nothing in legislation that prohibits them from doing that. Your objective is to continue to dismantle the ministry. Your objective is to continue to dismantle ministry regulations. Your objective is to get out of the whole business of environmental controls. Your objective is clear: It is to dismantle 50 years of work by governments of all three political stripes in this province to set some of the toughest environmental standards in North America, standards we have been proud of.

I can tell you, you've done more damage to environmental regulations in the last year than we've ever seen in the history of this province, and this is one further step. We're no longer talking simply about long-term effects on the environment. What we're talking about now is the impact on people's ability to afford water and sewer — water, one of the most essential needs, if not the most essential need, we have.

You have opened the door for the private sector to walk in, to be able to own these facilities and charge taxpayers and residents across Ontario whatever they want to provide those services, and what choice do those residents have? It is a monopoly. There is no alternative. There is no accountability. Once a municipal government gives up its power to control rates, who do the citizens turn to? They can no longer turn to their councillor because you've increased water rates. They can no longer turn to their MPP. Who do they turn to? Maybe they'll pick up the phone and call the CEO of a corporation. Maybe they'll pick up the phone and call someone on Bay Street or on Wall Street. I'm sure they'll get a quick response as to why their rates have gone up.

Clearly you have given municipalities the power and you are forcing municipalities to give up what is really the ace in the hole, and that is the ability to control water rates and sewer rates and what they charge taxpayers across this province.

This government has a brutal record when it comes to protecting essential services and protecting the environment and environmental services across Ontario. This is one more addition to that, and it's not simply the opposition saying that. Let me quote from the Ontario Municipal Water Association. This is a group that represents about 220 water treatment plants owned by local governments across Ontario.

Don Black, the executive director of the Ontario Municipal Water Association, said, "We believe the government is opening the floodgates to the irreversible deterioration of public waterworks in Ontario." I think it's a fairly credible source, a very credible spokesman, certainly in my view one much more credible than this minister or this ministry or this government when it comes to protecting water services across Ontario.

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This government has ignored all public warnings. They've ignored all public advice. They've ignored the auditor when it comes to dealing with environmental issues. Let me quote what the auditor had to say under "Overall Audit Observations," page 113: "The ministry needs to update its standards for air pollutants. Addi-

tionally, it needs to improve its monitoring efforts in the areas of air, water and hazardous waste material."

What does this government do in response to these recommendations? They lay off inspectors. They lay off the inspectors who do the monitoring for air, water and hazardous waste materials across Ontario. In response to concerns by the auditor that we need to upgrade the standards and strongly enforce the standards in Ontario, they lay off staff. They lay off the front-line men and women who do that enforcement. That is the commitment from that government.

Do you know why they do it? Because their friends in the private sector want them to do that, the big corporations that for years and years used to get away with murder, literally murder, when it came to environmental standards across Ontario. In many situations it hasn't changed yet. People may be shocked to know that a report last year from the Ministry of Environment — not a special interest group, not a watchdog group, but the Ministry of Environment — outlined that in my community of Hamilton-Wentworth 20 to 25 deaths a year occur as a result of dust particles known as PM-10.

We raised this issue with the minister in August. We raised it with the minister in October. We're sitting here in February and there's been absolutely no action, no initiative, taken by this government to deal with this issue of PM-10, the fine dust particles that the Ministry of Health itself estimates cost 20 to 25 deaths a year in Hamilton-Wentworth.

That's part of the record. That's part of what we have seen from this government. That is clearly an indication of how seriously this government takes environmental concerns, how seriously this government takes air pollution and water pollution concerns across Ontario. They take it seriously enough to simply ignore it and hope it'll go away on its own. It's not going to go away.

I fear that with the introduction of Bill 107, with Bill 26 added to that mix, you are now going to allow the lowering of the standards for drinking water across Ontario — not only selling the assets, not only allowing the private sector to put greed and money before people's health and before quality drinking water; you are now going to compromise the quality of drinking water across Ontario.

I find this interesting. I'd read this with some humour, if it weren't so serious. Here's another quote, from November 4 from Minister Sterling:

"After I've finished here I want to look back and say, 'Hey, I did some really positive things for the environment,' Mr Sterling said recently.... 'I really believe that too many politicians, after they've finished, can't look back and say, 'I did do something while I was there.'"

I can tell you, Mr Sterling has already done a great deal while he's been here. The minister has done tremendous work on behalf of private corporations at the expense of average Ontarians when it comes to health care.

What has this minister done? Let's look at the record. This minister and this government have downsized, have laid off, have reduced the size of the ministry staff by 40%. At a time when the auditor says we need more enforcement, we need higher standards, this government



responds by laying off 40% of its staff. Over 500 environmental investigators across Ontario have been laid off.

The report out of Hamilton-Wentworth that shows 20 to 25 deaths a year as a result of PM-10: How does the government respond? By shutting down the air monitoring station on Kentley Drive in my riding of Hamilton East. In a riding that abuts industry, in a riding where people's homes are a couple of hundred feet from industry, the government responds by shutting down an air monitoring station at the same time that the ministry releases a report that shows that 20 to 25 a year die in Hamilton-Wentworth as a result of one particular type of dust particle. That's their response.

The answer is: "If we just bury our heads in the sand, if we get rid of the staff and we can't do the investigating or the monitoring, if we get rid of the stations, you know what? The problem won't exist. That solves the problem. We just shut down the monitoring stations and we don't know there's a problem. We get rid of staff and we can't investigate, so we don't know there's a problem."

It's simple, just as simple as the Comic Book Revolution you introduced two years ago that's got simple answers to all the problems across this province; every single problem has a simple bumper-sticker solution. Whether it's welfare, whether it's employment equity, whether it's photo-radar, whatever the issue is, you've got a simple one-line solution that fits on a bumper sticker and sounds great in a 10-second clip.

You've done the same thing to the environment and you've done the same thing here. If you shut down the stations and you get rid of the staff, we don't have a problem in Ontario any more, because we can't tell there's a problem. How can you tell there's an air problem when you've shut down the monitoring station?

You have moved very clearly in your own business plan, you acknowledge, to self-monitoring and self-regulation by industry. What you're doing is allowing industries that over the years have polluted our air, our water, our environment and that over the years have been forced by government actions of former Conservative, Liberal and NDP governments to spend money in upgrading their facilities because we believe the health care of Ontarians is a priority and is important — what you're doing is now allowing these corporations, these companies, to self-monitor and self-regulate.

That is very clearly the equivalent of giving a drug addict the key to the pharmacy. That is very clearly allowing the people who have been responsible over the years for destroying our water, for destroying our environment, for destroying our air to be good corporate citizens and, on their own, monitor themselves. We've seen that that has been a failure, a dismal failure, in the past, and there's no indication for us to believe it will be any different today. The pattern continues.

We then look at this ongoing pattern of destruction in Bill 107 in the context of the bigger picture, in the context of the red tape review, which is a classic example of government using the excuse of cost-effectiveness and doing more for less to dismantle regulations and to lower standards across this province. What do some of the recommendations do? Let's see. Some of the recommendations again tie into the pattern. When you look at Bill

107, as I said earlier, you must look at it within the context of the bigger picture, within the context of this government's record on the environment and environmental protection.

What does the Red Tape Review Commission recommend? This commission recommends that recycling and waste reduction be voluntary for industrial, commercial and institutional establishments. No longer, if these recommendations are accepted, will the private sector, will industry, will commercial institutions across the province have to recycle. Waste reduction will no longer be mandatory. It will be at the whim of these corporations, of these industries, of these institutions. If they choose to do it and they can find money in their budgets, they'll do it; if they don't, it doesn't really matter. What does that do? That increases costs for public institutions, but it also increases the usage of landfill sites and incineration to get rid of this excess waste.

The commission also recommends that the assessment of environmental liabilities not include previous owners. We have seen in the past where there have been gas stations, where there have been chemical plants, as we've seen in my own community of Hamilton, that these owners have walked away. There have been regulations and enforcement mechanisms to at least allow the ministry some latitude and some power to go in and try to find these owners and hold them responsible for contamination of the site, cleanup of the soil that has been contaminated, cleanup of the site so it doesn't pose a health danger, it doesn't pose a risk for people, and at the same time it allows whoever buys the property that ability to do something with it.

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What the commission is now recommending to this government is that those rules be relaxed, that we no longer make any real effort to find previous owners, that it become the responsibility of the new owner. So an unsuspecting owner buys a piece of property that has contaminated soil because there may have been a gas station next door 20 years before or five years before, and that owner is stuck with the problem. That makes it easier for the private corporations, the friends of this government, to be able to walk away simply unscathed without any liability, without any responsibility.

The storage and transportation of PCBs: Over the years there has been a fairly rigid requirement in place. The storage and transportation of PCBs had to meet some fairly strict government regulations, MOE regulations and municipal approvals. I remember sitting on city council where, on a regular basis, we received reports from the MOE of requests from the private sector and from industries to move or store PCB waste across the city.

It was simply sent to us for consultation. It was sent to us for input. The ministry ultimately made the decision. But at least the municipality had some control over that. We were able to express our concerns, we were able to say: "We think it's a bad move. We don't think there should be a storage site here. We want to be aware of the fact that PCBs are being moved across our roads when and where in this community."

I understand there is a level of danger in PCBs between liquid PCBs and other forms, but at the end of



the day, if there's a fire, if there's an explosion, that level of danger exists in both situations, with both liquid and non-liquid PCBs. But what you have done through these regulations is you have allowed the free and uncontrolled movement and storage of PCBs, highly dangerous, potentially dangerous chemicals, in the communities across Ontario.

Why have you done that? Because this is part of the wish list that your friends in the private sector have wanted for years and years. But there hasn't been a government stupid enough to allow that to happen because they know there's a danger to the public in that. What does this government do? It says: "It's okay. Don't worry about the regulations, don't worry about controls, don't worry about having to notify municipalities that you're going to move PCBs or store PCBs in certain areas."

The same applies to the transportation of hazardous waste across public streets. Previous legislation forced industry to get permission and have qualified individuals and qualified companies remove, store and transport hazardous waste. This recommendation by the Red Tape Review Commission now says if a company wants to move hazardous waste from one site to another, it can do so across public streets without any approvals, without any controls, without any regulations. That is a time bomb waiting to explode.

I am not sure if the government really understands what this regulation means: It means if a company has two plants five kilometres apart in a municipality, they can move without any regulations, any controls, any approvals, hazardous waste from point A to point B those five kilometres without any government regulations whatsoever. It is dangerous and irresponsible of any government to expose the citizens of a community to that type of risk, but if this commission's recommendations are accepted, that's exactly what is going to happen here.

The environmental monitoring of substances under MISA will be severely reduced. This clearly puts our surface and drinking water at risk. The people of Ontario clearly will have to fear for the quality of the drinking water. People in Ontario should be able to turn on the tap and drink water without feeling they're going to get sick as a result of government deregulation.

The MISA project over the years and the regulations very clearly allowed some stricter controls and some monitoring of the effluents going in and coming out. That no longer will exist if this review is accepted. It means that the number of inspections will be reduced dramatically, that the government thought it would be cheaper for private corporations to have to inspect bimonthly rather than once a day. Of course it will be cheaper, but it's also unsafe, unhealthy and dangerous to the public and to the health of Ontarians.

This government has also chosen to go soft on companies that have been found or charged with violations across Ontario. We have seen, since this government came to power, a 40% reduction in charges laid and in convictions against the private sector. Is it a coincidence? Is it simply a coincidence that since this government came to power there has been a massive reduction in the number of charges laid against companies for acts against

the environment, for breaking environmental laws? Is it a coincidence that there has been a decline not only in the number of charges laid but in the number of convictions that have occurred? Is it strictly a coincidence?

I think not. I think it's a very clear message this government has sent that violators can get away with it, that violators across Ontario can very clearly do what they want and that this government is not going to charge them or, if they charge them, they'll probably let them off with a slap on the wrist. This has all been part of the pattern; this has all been part of the path of destruction that this government continues to unload to people across Ontario.

What is fundamentally different from regulation changes that have occurred in the past that people had problems with is that many of those changes and moves by government in the past to look at deregulating certain aspects of the environment and environmental controls had a long-term effect, effects that could be seen in five, 10, 15, 20, 30 years, not necessarily tomorrow or next week or next month, to the health of Ontarians.

The difference substantially to what this government is doing today is that we're no longer talking about environmental protection in the long term for our children, our grandchildren and so on. What we're talking about now is short-term, immediate threats to the health of Ontarians. If you go ahead with many of these moves, you're going to put the health of people across this province at risk. The danger is there. Your staffing cuts have certainly deteriorated the level of enforcement across Ontario, as have your lack of resolve to follow through on companies that have been charged and simply your deregulation.

As I said earlier, your answer is simple, as you have an answer for everything that is simple: "We'll deal with the environmental problems in Ontario in a very simple manner. We're going to reduce staff, we're going to get rid of regulations, we're not even going to charge companies and we're going to get rid of monitoring stations. Therefore, we don't know there's a problem, and if we do know there's a problem, we don't have the staff to follow it up and enforce it, and if we do enforce it and charge someone, we're not going to follow through with it and convict him." It's a very simple solution, but it's a solution that is really endangering the health of Ontarians.

This bill simply adds to that pattern of destruction. Bill 107 is nothing but a smokescreen for municipalities to basically be forced to sell to the private sector something that we in this province, in this country, believe is unthinkable.

Some of my colleagues across will say: "You know what? They've had that power before. Why haven't they done it?" They've had the power in the past, but first of all, as I said earlier, before Bill 26, your bully bill, municipalities had to go through a process of a public referendum before they sold any of these assets. That's no longer required. Number two, municipalities have never, ever been faced with such a massive dumping and added burden to the cost of doing business as they have today by your government.

It is absolutely ludicrous to allow the opportunity for municipalities to sell this asset. Companies will line up to



buy water and sewer infrastructure across Ontario, across this country, because it is a moneymaker. It can be made into a moneymaker. It will be made into a moneymaker because they don't have the responsibility the municipal councils have in setting water and sewer rates.

It really is not going to give the senior citizen in my riding on a fixed income or a small pension, or my injured worker, or my steelworker, the option of saying no to how much they pay for water once the private sector owns that service. You can't shut off the tap in the home and say, "We're not going to drink any water, because the rates are too high." This government doesn't seem to understand that. They don't understand the danger in the road that they've moved towards.

They don't understand that one simple change to this legislation would go a long way towards easing those concerns. If you are as convinced as you say you are and if you're as committed to clean and safe and affordable drinking water in Ontario, then for God's sake why would you not put in legislation a clause prohibiting municipalities from selling these assets? It is simple. It is not rocket science here. It is very simple. One line, one little amendment to this legislation would prohibit municipalities from doing what we all fear could happen.

1620

If you believe it is not going to happen, if your agenda is not be in the back pockets of the private sector and continue to do exactly what the private sector wants you to do, if your agenda is not to sell out the interests of Ontarians, if your agenda is not to jeopardize the health of Ontarians, if your agenda is not to simply dismantle every single regulation we have left, then the solution to this issue is a simple amendment to the bill.

I hope that the parliamentary assistant to the minister, once he gets up for his response, will agree to that and commit that this government will bring in an amendment to this bill that will prohibit municipalities from selling off the water and sewer assets, and therefore the control of rates. Anything short of that will do nothing more than continue to put into people's lives a fear that municipalities are going to sell off those assets to the highest bidder and that this government is in the back pockets of big business and the industry when it comes to protecting the environment.

**Mr Bradley:** I appreciate the opportunity the member for Hamilton East has provided me to participate in this debate as part of the leadoff of the official opposition, because I think this bill has very serious ramifications for this province. It is characterized as somewhat benign in that it is always dressed up in a name that makes it attractive, and on a continuing basis this government does that, when in fact if one looked at the title the government uses and then at the actual implications of this bill, we would see that there is a significant difference.

With all of the legislation and regulation this government is involved in, you must look in the context of the total picture, because it is part of a pattern of pushing the Ministry of Environment and the environment into the background, much to the chagrin of many people in this province. Fortunately for the government, in terms of public relations, it is a situation where there isn't much attention paid to this kind of bill, or in fact environmental issues.

The reason is that there are other issues of interest out there. I find that most unfortunate, because in virtually every move I see this government making I see a retreat on the environment.

I always seem to be speaking when my friend the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs is here, and it always reminds me, I guess brings me slightly off the intent of a bill when I see him here because I suspect, though I never expect him to publicly disagree with the government, that he must have a concern at the disappearance of agricultural land in this province, good agricultural land.

My friend the member for Victoria-Haliburton drives down Highway 401 towards eastern Ontario, where both the temperatures and quality of the soil do not lend themselves as much to certain crops as would the Niagara Peninsula, for instance. There are very few places where you can grow such things as peaches and cherries, and plums and grapes. I don't think you can grow them very well in eastern Ontario.

My friend the member for St Catharines-Brock would be aware of this. Tomorrow, for instance, the Ontario Grape Growers' Marketing Board, will be here at the Legislature — first of all at their offices in St Catharines; here at the Legislature at 3:30 — to present its annual report. I think they've had some degree of success. There's been a major turnaround in that industry. When I look at it, I say part of the reason might well have been the very significant infusion of funds that took place in the late 1980s and 1990 that helped turn that around, and I might add to the Minister of Agriculture — he will find this amusing and nod in agreement — much to the chagrin of the Treasurer of the day, I believe, who thought it was a costly program. But the Premier of the day, Premier Peterson, was quite supportive of it.

The point I make with the agricultural land is that we're seeing new proposals on good agricultural land to eat it up. One of the assets we have, as you have, Mr Speaker, in southwestern Ontario, one of the genuine assets we have in the Niagara Peninsula is that agricultural land. There's a new industry now — not entirely new but a growing industry — which is agritourism. People like being able to come through the rural areas of the Niagara Peninsula to visit some of our cottage wineries and larger wineries, to take advantage of the fresh product that is available during the summer months. I lament the fact that we are now seeing some proposals to further gobble up that agricultural land, which once turned over for development will no longer be available for agriculture.

One of the most important industries we have, I think the minister would agree with me, is the agricultural industry, often underrated by others. You will recall when the previous government rushed to the aid of the steel industry in Sault Ste Marie and the pulp and paper industry in northern Ontario — and I was supportive of that, and we've seen a turnaround — because there was a significant number of jobs, hundreds or into the thousands of jobs that depended on it. But because agriculture is spread out across the province, people don't always recognize that when it's in jeopardy, when it isn't a strong industry, we lose thousands upon thousands of



jobs and a lot of money to go with it, in terms of taxes that come to government, but as important, in terms of purchasing power for those individuals. So I look to the government to protect that and I relate it to this because this is an environmental bill and environment involves protecting farm land.

On the bill itself, it is part of the downloading or dumping of this government of so many responsibilities to municipalities. I recall, when I was Minister of Environment, that there were a lot of small municipalities, many, by the way, in the Minister of Agriculture's part of the province, that were dependant upon the Ministry of Environment for some funding and for some assistance.

I thought he wrote some good letters at that time. My staff used to comment on the quality of the letters, the tone of the letters that came to the office. We were able to respond favourably as much as possible to the suggestions for specific areas of funding for the smaller municipalities, in particular in eastern Ontario and in other parts of the province.

Now we see the province abandoning that field and saying, "Well, locally you have control." I know the parliamentary assistant mentioned that 75% of water plants and sewage treatment plants are in the control of municipalities, and they are by and large the larger municipalities in the province. The 25% that are the responsibility of the smaller municipalities should be of equal concern. I represent a large urban riding, an almost entirely urban riding, so if you want to look at it on a parochial basis, there's nothing particularly for me or my constituents in this bill. But all of us are elected to look at the good of the province as a whole, and I am concerned about those municipalities which I think will be forced into privatization — they really will.

1630

I know the agenda of the Minister of Environment and Energy is to privatize the Ontario Clean Water Agency that we have. Frankly I was never particularly enamoured of setting up a specific agency. I always thought it was better as part of the Ministry of the Environment, but the previous government did that and said there were safeguards there. I guess as long as there were, there wasn't irreparable damage done.

We have a situation now where it's made it easy for the Ontario government to dump the Ontario Clean Water Agency into the private sector. We've seen examples in Britain of what happens when you privatize water and sewer services. There are some services that the private sector can handle that the government in some cases has privatized and may not have had much flak from the public at large. I think it's always worthy of governments to examine all their operations to see how they can best be handled. I don't deny the government that opportunity.

I think one area where the government should be involved on behalf of its citizens is in the delivery of water services and sewage treatment services. When you privatize that, you're heading down a slippery slope into the unknown, except that it isn't entirely unknown if you look at the British experience where water rates zoomed, service wasn't that good and disadvantaged people often had their water cut off.

I remember looking at the program and taping the portion of the program, *The 5th Estate*, which dealt with

that, and I read a number of articles on that and heard speeches people have made about this particular problem. I think this is where this government is heading, and the reason is, as in so many cases, strictly ideological. It is not practical. It is not the approach of Darcy McKeough, who many people always thought was a right-winger; Darcy today wouldn't be a right-winger in this government. Mr McKeough saw a role for the public sector to play as well, and I think this government is abandoning virtually all those areas, and while I hope for the best — I'm not here to hope for the worst; I'm not that kind of person — I really fear that it is a wrong path you're moving down in many of these areas.

If we look at concerns we have, there was mention of, "Well, weren't those municipalities irresponsible because they built oversized sewage treatment plants?" The reason they built them was because you have to accept the fact, even though we'd like to think otherwise, that there is extraneous flow which gets into these water systems.

There is some thought — interestingly enough it swings back and forth, and those who follow it perhaps would find it a bit amusing — originally they said: "You shouldn't treat stormwater. Separate the stormwater and the sewage which comes out of a house."

So municipalities such as mine in St Catharines spent millions of dollars separating stormwater and sanitary, meaning sewer water that comes out of a household and out of industries, so that the stormwater would flow directly into the waterway nearby, in our case Lake Ontario, and the other would go through a sewage treatment plant. But when we started to look at the quality of the stormwater going through a major urban area, we found out that quality wasn't all that good and that it wasn't all that bad to treat some of that water.

One of the best solutions, and I heard members mention it before, was retention tanks, retention ponds which would control the flow into a sewage treatment plant. But there were many situations where either development couldn't take place, or second, where the plant could not hold anything involving a 30-year storm, for instance. So the operator has the choice. I think I saw this on a program on PBS, the Public Broadcasting System in the US, on the Boston sewage treatment system where they had to, as I say, let her rip. That meant bypass the plant and let everything go into the lake because there wasn't the capacity. I think those people weren't being so wrongheaded as they were being cautious about the environment.

The Ministry of Environment and Energy, in this context, should be looked at carefully. To be successful, and this isn't necessarily the case of all ministries, the Ministry of Environment needs four things, basically: (1) It needs adequate funding; (2) it needs substantial staff to carry out its responsibilities; (3) it needs resources — that's equipment, I think of things such as equipment; (4) it needs clout. In all four instances this government is diminishing the role of the Ministry of Environment, which had gained some prominence.

When one of the previous governments, the Liberal government, came into office in 1985 the Ministry of the Environment was considered to be a minor ministry. A minister was either on his way up or his way down, but



the minister always spent a few months on the job. The minister was not in the position of being on the policies and priorities board or the economic development committee or the management board. It was a junior ministry. That was turned around in 1985 because the government that was elected, I think certainly partially in response to large public demand, wanted to see the Ministry of the Environment play a much more significant role. There were people out there who were concerned.

I know there are people today, as there were then, who hate the Ministry of Environment because it's an inconvenience for them, because it may diminish their profit to a certain extent, because it may get in their way. But there are a lot of people in this province, citizens who appreciated some of the improvements that have been made over the years through the auspices of the ministry.

When you remove the funding, when you cut the funding by 33%, by fully one third, when you cut the staff way back so that I don't think anybody from Ontario now goes down to check the monitoring stations along the Niagara River, which has some of the most toxic waste sites sitting on the American side, with seepages going into the Niagara River, they're virtually abandoning their responsibility because they don't have the staff and they don't have the money and they don't have the resources.

When they have all three, somebody's saying, "Remember we're supposed to be business-friendly," which makes them hesitate about bothering an industry that might well be causing some damage to the environment. This will help you if you're aiming at that group to support you because they will come to your fund-raisers; they will be supportive of you because you are taking away laws which get in their way.

I go back to the point I've made in many cases in this House, that there are a lot of good corporate citizens, and the good corporate citizens support strong laws and strong enforcement of the laws because they have nothing to fear. They spend the money on training their employees, on the necessary equipment, on changes of process and on developing an attitude among everybody in the company that's pro-environment. Those companies don't worry about strong laws, they don't worry about strong enforcement; they want it. They want it because they know they may have some competitors who are prepared to cut corners to make changes which affect the environment adversely, and they want a level playing field. I appreciated the support of those people, as I do today.

I was talking to an individual the other day — who will remain nameless, so you might say, "He probably makes this up if he says that"; I'm not — who was here on a special occasion, and I was quite surprised because the person was from the private sector, from a company, and he was very critical of what this government was doing on the environment. What a turnaround, because 12 years ago, a dozen years ago that person from that company would probably have been wanting the government to deregulate, to scale back on its environmental operations. But this company had made tremendous advances not only in technology, in the way of working, but in general attitude, and was now trying to drag others

along. This person was lamenting certain changes that were being made to the deregulation process under the auspices of the member for Lincoln.

We also look at a report that says convictions are down. Why are convictions down? Is it because everybody is now obeying the law of the province? I don't think so. Convictions are down because if you don't look for the problems, you won't find them. If you have fewer staff to enforce the environmental laws of the province, you're going to have fewer prosecutions and fewer convictions.

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I guess the ultimate goal of any government of any society would be to have no convictions for the reason that nobody is breaking the law, but I think all of us are wise enough to know that at midnight, you know what happens. The dump goes. Up go the emissions into the air, the effluent into the soil, the effluent into the waterway. That's why we need a strong investigations and enforcement branch, totally independent of the rest of the ministry, independent of the minister's direction, to enforce the laws of the province.

I heard reference made to septic systems by my friend the member for Dufferin-Peel, and I can tell you that there is a problem with septic systems. I used to hear people say: "Well, you know, those pointed-headed people down at the ministry don't know what they're talking about. We know common sense, and what we're proposing is not a problem." Then, when they were stewing in their own sewage, they'd come down to the Ministry of the Environment and say, "You should be providing clean water for us." And you end up doing it, though you well recall the dismissal of scientists and technicians from the Ministry of the Environment as "those people from Toronto who don't know what they're talking about." Again, you have to be careful when doing that, because that's what happens, and I've had this told to me by many people who regretted after that they had had certain exemptions or certain changes to laws over the years which didn't allow for careful observation of septic systems. Unfortunately, some parts of the province are stuck with that.

Let's look at the cuts to the Ministry of Environment. The total ministry staff in 1994-95, and that was even after some cuts by the NDP, was 2,400. The 1996 business plan cuts call for 752 jobs or 31% of the total staff to be eliminated. In budget cuts, 1994-95, again after the budget of the ministry had been reduced by the previous government, \$286 million. The current operating budget for 1996-97 is \$175 million, so the total operating budget cut was 39% or \$111 million.

There's been a reduction in laboratory services, elimination of three regional labs — Thunder Bay, Kingston and London — and a reduction of jobs at the lone remaining Toronto lab, a total reduction of 106 jobs. These labs do water and soil sample tests, lab work to be consolidated in the Toronto lab, with most work now left to private labs, and most private labs charge more for the same tests. Therefore, there are impacts on municipalities having their waters tested. I think I saw something where agricultural people were complaining the other day as well about an increased cost they were going to face.



Inspection staff in the budget were greatly reduced, 141 jobs lost. For example, there's only one air quality inspector left for the entire province. Reduction in inspection and enforcement has resulted in a drop in charges against the polluters. As I had mentioned, 683 charges were laid against polluters in the first 10 months of 1996 compared with 1,037 in all of 1995, a 21% reduction, and fines have dropped off by 57% in 1997. You can't tell me that's because suddenly everybody has become an angel. It's because the job isn't being done.

You closed the regional office in Sudbury: 26 jobs gone. Your prosecution unit has been reduced from 10 staff in 1990 to four staff in 1996. The number of water monitoring stations has fallen from nearly 700 in 1991 to just over 200 in 1996. Many programs are ending in 1997-98, including the Home Green Up program, support for the blue box program, and rural and urban beach cleanup. The operating transfers to the Niagara Escarpment Commission have been cut by 28%, or \$700,000.

In terms of regulation, legislation, you passed Bill 76, changes to the Environmental Assessment Act that tie the hands of the Environmental Assessment Board to adequately review major environmental projects. There is no requirement now that major new landfill sites be referred to the board for a full environmental review.

You passed Bill 57, changes to the Environmental Protection Act, which now gives the minister sweeping powers to exempt any person, activity or thing from the Environmental Protection Act. It gives the minister sweeping powers to offload responsibility for enforcing certain environmental standards on to the municipalities — municipalities, I might add, that are getting other responsibilities. So you're sticking the municipalities with all of these increasing costs, and all of these good programs have to compete with one another now at the local level. You're not going to see standard enforcement across the province. You're not going to see standard quality across the province, as we used to have, under the auspices of the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and the Ministry of Environment.

The environmental regulatory review that was conducted by the member for Lincoln resulted in 40 environmental regulations that are proposed to be changed or scrapped under your so-called Responsive Environmental Protection paper. You've enacted regulation exempting established gravel pit owners from needing permits to quarry on the Niagara Escarpment. These are changes that are taking place in the context of this legislation.

I was rather taken by the Ontario Municipal Water Association press release on December 3, 1996, just a couple of months ago. It was entitled "Ontario's Drinking Water in Jeopardy: Ontario Municipal Water Association Calls for Public Hearings."

"The Ontario Municipal Water Association today challenged Premier Mike Harris to undertake full public hearings into the provision of drinking water in the province.

"Representing members who supply water to eight million Ontario residents, the Ontario Municipal Water Association today warned that the government is jeopardizing the future of Ontario's water system through deliberate policies of neglect and deregulation, without benefit of public input or consideration of alternatives.

"'We believe the government is opening the floodgates to the irreversible deterioration of water services in Ontario,' said Don Black, executive director of OMWA. 'It's a situation that is transforming Ontario's reliable and safe water service into one marked by chaos and fragmentation. The government clearly has no plan to safeguard our drinking water and to ensure the high quality, low cost and reliable water system we enjoy today.'"

It's not me saying this; this is not the opposition. This is the Ontario Municipal Water Association. That's not a radical group, to my knowledge. That's a very responsible group. It's not an anti-government group. It's a group that's expressing a genuine concern. They go on to say in their press release:

"It is the province's responsibility to oversee protection of public health and the natural environment, and to ensure the availability of basic, vital infrastructure regardless of a municipality's ability to pay.

"Instead, the Ontario government is paving the way for privatization, where private operators have profit, not customers, as their prime concern. Municipalities will be further squeezed by reduced transfer payments so they may be forced to cross-subsidize other services with water revenues. This can create an incentive for municipalities to make up lost revenues through hidden taxes in water rates.

"'The Ontario government is shedding its responsibilities for this vital service to the detriment of all Ontario residents,' said Black. 'Water is a vital service, not a commodity to be bought and sold. And public health should not be compromised by lax standards and minimal enforcement.'"

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The Ontario Municipal Water Association detailed three areas where government initiatives threaten the future provision of water services. Let me share with you what those three areas are.

"(1) The Who Does What panel recommends off-loading provincial costs to the municipal level. This makes it difficult for local governments to maintain dedicated revenues for water services and opens the door to privatization and a patchwork of operational standards. Standards are difficult to enforce since the province has cut its enforcement capability significantly."

"(2) The government has indicated it will privatize the Ontario Clean Water Agency, which would affect more Ontario residents than any other privatization such as the LCBO." By the way, I happen to oppose the privatization of the LCBO as well. "With no public hearings or input, the government is leaving the system to the whim of private operators. Privatization of water in Britain has been a failure, resulting in higher water prices and poorer service for customers and windfall profits for operators.

"(3) The government has eliminated the requirement for public referenda before dissolution of public utility commissions, which denies water customers any input or choice into the future of their drinking water. This runs counter to the government's stated intention to increase the use of referenda to encourage greater participation in local decision-making."

"Mr Black added that public hearings are necessary to allow Ontario residents input into decisions affecting their



drinking water. 'This will enable the government to develop a credible blueprint for the future of drinking water in this province.'

"The Ontario Municipal Water Association speaks for 237 member water authorities across the province on matters related to the treatment and supply of drinking water in Ontario. OMWA brings together a cross-section of expertise and specialization."

When I look at what the Ontario Municipal Water Association has to say, an independent body, a non-radical body, an objective body, I become concerned. They were doing a little bit of question and answer and they said, "What do people in Ontario think about their supply of drinking water?" This was an addendum to their press release. It said: "A recent Insight Canada Research poll overwhelmingly demonstrates that most Ontario residents believe that water is a public good and not a private commodity. The research shows that 77% of Ontarians feel that water rates should only be used to improve the water system and not other services; 77% of Ontario residents favour water being sold at cost and at no profit; and 76% of Ontarians want water utilities to be controlled by municipal officials, not private businesses."

One would say, in the case of the 25%, that it would probably be the provincial government they wouldn't mind. I didn't mind, as I say, when the provincial government ran it, even this provincial government, because I think some of the people working there were very much dedicated to providing good water and sewage services.

The government has had the opportunity to prohibit municipalities from selling off their water systems, but they've refused to include this in Bill 107. As my colleague the environment critic from Hamilton East said, we in the Liberal opposition will be introducing an amendment to include this sell-off prohibition in the legislation.

Given all the responsibilities dumped on municipalities, some municipalities may not be able to afford the high cost of assuming the debt and maintaining and repairing water and sewage plants. Municipalities then would be forced to sell these plants off to the highest bidder, and I don't think that won't happen. It will. Given the fact that his government has a one third staff and a one third budget cut to the Ministry of Environment and Energy, there may be too few inspection and enforcement personnel left to adequately monitor the quality of our drinking water.

We are concerned with many parts of this bill. Bill 107 is part of your government's mega-week or Who Does What announcements that will result in property taxpayers facing \$1 billion more in downloaded costs. The two key elements of the bill deal with downloading to municipalities the ownership of 230 water and sewage treatment plants and the responsibility for inspecting and improving septic systems. Both elements of Bill 107 are in line with certain recommendations you have received.

I express that concern. I really think this is a move in the wrong direction. I really think this is a move towards downloading and dumping on municipal taxpayers. Let's remember, whether it's water charges or other user fees that you place on people at the municipal level or

whether it is property taxes, none of these takes into account a person's ability to pay. But what you are cutting is the one tax that does take into account a person's ability to pay: the income tax. And you will extol the virtues of doing that. You will go to people and say, "See, we cut your income tax," and the very wealthiest people in this province will applaud, because they're going to get most of the money. Not percentage-wise, but certainly they are going to —

**Mr Tom Froese (St Catharines-Brock):** Mr Speaker, 107.

**Mr Bradley:** The member for St Catharines-Brock intervenes. I think he must be embarrassed by the fact that his government is borrowing \$5 billion a year to pay for an income tax cut and that it is downloading so many responsibilities on to the municipalities.

**Mr Froese:** A point of order, Mr Speaker.

**Mr Bradley:** This will give me a little break here. That's okay.

**Mr Froese:** I know the member for St Catharines needs a break to get his composure and get a glass of water, so that's why I figured I'd stand on a point of order. But he's talking about everything except the bill that we're debating. I just want to inform him, and especially the people of St Catharines, that I am fully supportive of the tax cut and what we're doing in this government.

**Mr Bradley:** I'm glad to hear that. The people who see their hospitals closing to pay for the tax cut will be delighted to hear my friend from St Catharines-Brock defending that tax cut that we're paying for by closing hospitals in our area and downloading on to local municipalities. I'm pleased he made this intervention. I don't know if he is now, but I'm pleased he made this intervention.

But I'm getting back to the point of how you assume costs. That's what Bill 107 is about. It's about who assumes the costs for these particular programs. The reason is that we have to pay for this bizarre tax scheme that you have, which will benefit the most wealthy people in our society the most.

When I talk to people, as maybe when you talk to some people, Mr Speaker, they say to me, "Originally I thought this 30% income tax cut was a good idea," and the richest people still say it is. Now when I speak to them, they say, "But if it means the closing of hospitals in Listowel and St Catharines and Port Colborne and Fort Erie and Niagara-on-the-Lake and Grimsby, or if it means downloading of responsibility for sewage treatment plants and water treatment plants, I tell you something, I'd rather see that money stay in the system and help to preserve the quality of life that we in Ontario have today." That's what they want.

The Premier is now spending millions of dollars trying to sell himself and sell Ontario. He has different programs for the purpose of advertising. One of the best ways you sell this province is to have a high quality of life: a strong Ministry of Environment, good water and sewage system, great health care system. All of those help us to attract people to Ontario. I would say the people in these municipalities affected by this bill would much rather see the province continue to provide funding



for local sewer and water works than pay for the television ads that have Premier Harris on them almost on a minute-by-minute basis.

The Conservative Party — now the Conservative government, because it is taxpayers' money — is spending more money on this ad campaign than the Conservative Party spent in the whole last election campaign on television advertising. Every time anyone turns on that television set and sees the Premier undoing the wires or sitting in the classroom or whatever else he's doing, they should know they're paying for those ads. That should be the reaction, not the simplistic and simple message which tries to take a very complex downloading and dumping on to municipalities and make something out of it. Instead they should be looking at the advertising.

I know why my colleague from St Catharines-Brock is embarrassed, because he knows that the advertising we're seeing on the television networks is self-serving government propaganda paid for out of the pockets of taxpayers, many of whom disagree with this government. But I digress, with your tolerance.

1700

I want to compliment this Speaker. You people over there are trying to harass the Speaker. He understands probably better than most members of the House the latitude that's required on second reading of legislation and how one must put the intricacies of a bill in a general context. I only wish the rest of you in this House were as wise and observant and perceptive as this Speaker. He understands it, and some of the people who are trying to harass him obviously don't understand that.

*Interjections.*

**Mr Bradley:** I will wait for the din to die down a bit, Mr Speaker.

I want to look at something else that is going to hurt the municipalities. This is what is going to hurt them. In the context of this, at the same time that you're going to increase costs for the municipalities, you're saying to them: "Oh, but we're going to help our developer friends out. We're not going to allow those municipalities any more. We've got another bill out there, don't worry. We're going to look after you, developers."

Hazel McCallion is concerned about it, and you don't want to incur the wrath of Hazel McCallion. My friend Don Cousens, the mayor of Markham — he used to sit in this House; now he would be called a red Tory; you remember him sitting in this House — he's critical. He says when you're putting all these things down on the local taxpayer, when you're taking long-term care, when you're taking a lot of health care, when you're taking everything and dumping it, including this bill, dumping responsibility for sewer and waterworks on the local municipality, he is going to be very concerned about that. I don't blame those who would be concerned about this because it's all part of the mix, it's all within the context of this legislation.

We're having a change of Speakers here several times during my remarks, but the Speaker who is now entering the chair — because I was making reference to it in the context of how money should be spent on these municipalities as opposed to advertising — who is sitting in the chair now, the Honourable Chris Stockwell, the member

for Etobicoke West, was the person who came down with the ruling which was critical of your advertising program because he observed it as being partisan in nature.

I say to the Speaker, who understands well the need for latitude, because I have copies of his old speeches, what I am explaining, Mr Speaker, as you enter the chair, is how much more productive it would be for the government to spend money on the sewage treatment plants and the water treatment plants it's abandoning instead of the self-serving government propaganda of which you were so justifiably critical just a few days ago in your landmark ruling in this House, which is now reverberating right across this province.

I look at what you people are doing and I say, put all these costs to the local taxpayer? The property tax doesn't take into account a person's ability to pay; the income tax does. If you happen to be unemployed for a period of time, then you will not be paying the same rate of income tax. Your income tax will go down. It'll take into account your ability to pay. But your municipal property tax doesn't take that into account. The municipality cannot exempt you from paying municipal taxes if you don't have a job. They'll say, "That's your problem." That's why it's much fairer to use the income tax, as opposed to the property tax, to finance many of these items.

As you get into user fees, they work to the detriment of disadvantaged people and to the benefit of the richest in our society. Whether it's for health care, whether it's for environmental services, whether it's a kid going to the hockey rink who sees the cost of ice going up so high that that kid can't afford it because you have user fees, while the children of the rich can afford to play, that's not the Ontario I'm looking forward to.

I noticed today that the Minister of Education, in the same context, said of universities and community colleges: "We're going to deregulate. They can put their tuition fees up substantially." What will happen there? That will mean the richest kids in our society will be able to go to college and university, will be able to gain an advantage, and those from lower-income families will not easily be able to do so.

All of this fits in that context. You ask: How can the debate take place? Who will oppose this? Where will the editorialists be on this? What will the writers be writing about this? I look and say that I really don't know because I see one person now controlling 58 of 104 daily newspapers in this country.

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** And I'm having a very difficult time relating that back to Bill 107.

*Interjections.*

**Mr Bradley:** I know that the Speaker has incurred the wrath of the governing party with his landmark ruling, but I hope that he would not allow the wrath of the government — as I know he wouldn't, being a man of integrity — and the barracking of the government benches to influence his decision, because I have in Hansard many of the copies of his former speeches where he fully recognized the importance of allowing to speak in the general context on second reading.

**Mr E.J. Douglas Rollins (Quinte):** Water isn't all over everything.



**Mr Bradley:** The member says, "Water isn't all over everything," and it is.

What I wanted to explain to you was that we can debate this in this House but you must share my concern that Hollinger, controlled by Conrad Black, will be having editorialists write about this bill; and when they're hiring former Harris advisers, former Harris policy analysts with previous experience with the Fraser Institute, that right-wing institute in British Columbia, and former Reform Party policy analysts as editorial writers, how can we expect objectivity?

We need a little more latitude in this House because there are people who get to watch this channel and they get informed. Certainly they have to watch this channel to see some of us from the Niagara Peninsula, because they're not going to read about us in the St Catharines Standard, as the member for St Catharines-Brock nods, unless of course we were bitten by a dog or something; that may be a story.

You'll be surprised to know, for instance, that the excellent question that I asked of the Premier yesterday on the Grimsby hospital — my friend from St Catharines-Brock won't be surprised — did not make it to the pages of the St Catharines Standard. The number one issue in the Niagara Peninsula —

**The Speaker:** I'm beginning to feel this speech won't make it there either unless we get back to Bill 107.

**Mr Bradley:** This is what happens when we have a bored Speaker, I think.

**Mr Froese:** Boring.

**Mr Bradley:** I didn't say "boring." The Speaker is anything but boring. I know it can be a tedious job at times, and the desire to intervene in the debate by one who was so vociferous in the past and made such an outstanding contribution to debates of the past is fully understandable.

Having said that, I want to say that I think it's unhealthy that Conrad Black controls all of these newspapers, including now the St Catharines Standard.

I will move back to the actual provisions of this piece of legislation and the context in which I deal with it, which is what this government has been doing.

Here's a letter, by the way, I got from the now adult son of a former strong Conservative who ends this way: "I would really appreciate any suggestions you might have on how to get this government to listen. I'm at a loss. Good luck on your own efforts and congratulations on your efforts to date." This is from Campbellford, Ontario, a former student of mine. I recall his father, and his uncle certainly today, being a strong Conservative supporter. Even those people recognize that this government is moving too quickly, too drastically and without evaluating the consequences of its actions, and that is epitomized in this particular piece of legislation.

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I want to congratulate, first of all, the Liberal critic, the member for Hamilton East, on developing so many of the points to advantage, on sharing with the people of his province some of the concerns he has. He looked at his bill in the context of the following: that the Harris government has disbanded the Environmental Assessment Advisory Committee, which I know the Speaker sup-

ported so strongly in years gone by; disbanded the Municipal-Industrial Strategy for Abatement Advisory Committee; disbanded the Advisory Committee on Environmental Standards; disbanded the Ontario Round Table on Environment and Economy; terminated funding for the blue box recycling program; cut the green communities program, which boosted Ontario's green industry, some of which was located in Etobicoke — saved homeowners and businesses money is what that industry did; terminated environmental research grants; terminated public environmental education grants; terminated urban and rural beaches cleanup and restoration programs; terminated household hazardous waste programs; reduced the funding to the Niagara Escarpment Commission, the Ontario Energy Board, which I think it is abolishing, and the Environmental Appeal Board, which is so important; cut the conservation authority funding by 70% — you will find this amusing, Mr Speaker: I keep my old letters. You know I do not often throw things out.

**Mr Froese:** I think you should send the Minister of Environment.

**Mr Bradley:** Well, you would need a certificate of approval for my office to store things, the way it exists.

The conservation authority wrote to me, I'm going to say about 1987, and said, "We can't possibly live with this 3.5% increase in funding," and I'm saying here the Conservative government has cut conservation authority funding by 70%.

You have terminated the program aimed at preserving the province's fruit lands; you are revoking Bill 163 measures which protect the environment in the planning process, such as speeding the development of agricultural land; you are permitting contaminated soil to be used as cover at landfills; you are considering eliminating 80 regulations protecting the environment; you have refused to permit the passage of the city of Toronto's clean air bylaw; you have fired environmentalists from the Hydro board of directors; you have exempted the Ministry of Finance from the Environmental Bill of Rights; you have proposed reducing wetlands areas to which strict development restrictions apply; you are permitting the sale of environmentally sensitive lands protected by conservation authorities; you are reducing environmental regulations on the mining industry; and you have removed legislated restrictions on the development of public lands.

All of this I think paints a very accurate picture of a government in full retreat. I can hear the backup sound you hear on vehicles, the beep, beep, beep, and I can see the tail-lights as this government does a full retreat. I can hear them sounding the bugles of retreat on the environment, and this bill is only one component of that full retreat.

You will pay a price eventually. Yes, the news media don't cover environmental issues the way they used to. The environment minister can walk out of the House and head off to Ottawa at any time without being hassled.

**Mr Floyd Laughren (Nickel Belt):** That's because of Conrad Black.

**Mr Bradley:** The member says it's because of Conrad Black and he's probably right. But the day will come when the people of this province, concerned about the



environment, will rise up and throw out the government which so adversely impacted it.

**The Speaker:** Questions and comments?

**Mr Laughren:** Thank you, Mr Speaker. I want to congratulate the member for St Catharines for his speech despite your rather restrictive admonitions to him. I thought he did remarkably well.

**Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener):** I'd like to hear what you are going to say to him.

**Mr Laughren:** No, I usually listen to the member for St Catharines when he speaks. I think he shares my view on this and some other matters — not all matters — in that the real agenda here is to take the sewer and water services of this province and download them on to the municipalities, put the squeeze on the municipalities like they've never been squeezed before. At the end of the day, you will get your way. You will have your way with the sewer and water services in this province and they will be privatized because the municipalities will not be able to absorb the cost of those sewer and water services. They will be desperate for money because of your downloading, and they'll be looking desperately for assets to unload to help them through a very difficult time.

I can see it coming now, and what I find so offensive about it is that this government, the pack of scoundrels that you are, you didn't have —

**Mr O'Toole:** Mr Speaker —

**Mr Laughren:** Oh, get down off your hind legs.

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker:** Humour doesn't enter into — out-of-order comments or not, you've got to be a little more careful.

**Mr Laughren:** Yes. Thank you, Mr Speaker, for yet another admonition.

I must say that what got me going was in thinking of how the government didn't have the courage to do through the front door what they're now trying to do through the back door, and that's privatize the sewer and water services in this province, but I'm sure I'll have an opportunity to say considerably more about that tomorrow.

**Mr Galt:** It was interesting to hear the comments made by the two Liberal members, and particularly the member for St Catharines when he was referring to Bill 107 and talking about bizarre tax cuts. I don't know if he noticed, but I had to go around after Christmas apologizing to my Liberal friends for the traffic jams in the local shopping malls. That's what the tax cut is doing. It's stimulating the economy, it's getting all kinds of sales going on in retail outlets, and I really appreciate the Liberals reminding the public that those tax cuts have occurred because that reminds them to get out and spend the money that they have saved and that they have accumulated, and it is stimulating the economy. Thank you ever so kindly, the member for St Catharines, for continuing to remind them of that.

I think it's also very refreshing to see that the members in the Liberal Party are particularly concerned about tax increases. I think we've won the battle. They've stood up day after day, concerned about tax increases in municipalities. I never thought I'd hear that come from a member of the Liberal Party, or from the NDP for that

matter, and day after day they're expressing concern about tax increases. I think that's marvellous, just marvellous. We've won the battle as far as I'm concerned.

The member for St Catharines also made reference to the advertisements that have been on the television, informing the public about who does what. If we really work hard in the spending, it may approach \$8 million. It sounds like a lot, but it's just half the amount that the NDP spent, because they were double that amount, not to mention the five years that the Liberals were there, when they spent three times that much to advertise what they were doing, three times what we've been spending in this past year.

**Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin):** I wanted briefly to comment on the fine interventions by the member for Hamilton East and the member for St Catharines when they talk about this bill.

When I think about the implications of this bill, we're starting to see it almost before it happens. In my constituency of Algoma-Manitoulin, we are seeing sewer and water rates escalate at breathtaking degrees. The people in Elliot Lake and Espanola, and soon probably in the smaller communities along the North Shore and on Manitoulin, are seeing tremendous increases in the fees they pay for water and sewer. I was quite surprised to notice that the region of Sudbury is talking about gigantic increases to water and sewer fees.

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As this bill continues the move towards privatization, making private operation profit the driving motive behind supplying water and sewer, I can tell the consumers in Ontario what that means to them. It means higher prices; it means you're going to pay more. Frankly, as the two members suggested, I think we can expect not the same kind of guarantees that we have clean water to drink and that our sewage is properly treated so that our lakes and rivers in this province are able to maintain and improve their quality.

As the critic for natural resources, one of the things I know, and I think everybody knows — it almost goes without saying — is that clean water, a clean environment, is the most important thing we can have for fishing, for all of the things that we take for granted in this province. For the government to steadily erode regulations and to attack —

**The Speaker:** Thank you. Questions and comments?

**Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold):** I watched on the closed circuit the comments of the member for Hamilton East and the member for St Catharines. Their comments were arresting, I tell you, exposing virtually the criminal consequences of the inevitability under this government of the privatization of water and sewage systems.

Down in regional Niagara, the regional government alone, because of the downloading — and these are early figures; they're modest, indeed conservative figures — is going to be confronted with a criminal shortfall of \$31 million. Each municipality within regional Niagara will in its own right suffer to the tune of millions and millions of dollars in each of those cities as a result of the downloading.



I know what's going on here, and a whole lot of folks down in Niagara do too. That's why they're banding together to protest to try to stop this government as it torpedoes the Port Colborne Hospital and Hotel Dieu. We witnessed, and the member for St Catharines has talked about, the 5,000 people that gathered in the riding of Lincoln to protest this government's abandonment of hospitals.

Has this government abandoned communities? Has this government abandoned cooperative effort among members of those communities? Yes. The lure of a big, fat cheque for a one-time-only purchase of a sewer and water system is going to be compelling for a whole lot of municipal and regional councils. The consequences are going to be the worst of all worlds. Thatcher's Britain tried it and has demonstrated the inevitable failure of the privatization of water and sewage. This government is going to —

**The Speaker:** Thank you. Responses? The member for St Catharines.

**Mr Bradley:** I want to thank each of the members for their contribution to this, because each has been very helpful. The member for Cochrane South responded yesterday and I didn't thank him for it, so I thank him today. And the members for Nickel Belt, Northumberland, Algoma-Manitoulin and Welland-Thorold were all helpful in their remarks, even if I didn't agree with necessarily everything the member for Northumberland said. I would have preferred that he let the member for St Catharines-Brock up so he could defend the tax cut more than that was being funded by the closing of the hospitals in our area, but he didn't let him up.

This is, as members have said, part of the downloading process. This is why tomorrow night at the CAW hall in St Catharines at 6 o'clock there will be so many people, hundreds upon hundreds of people, gathering to protest the closing of Hotel Dieu Hospital and other hospitals in the area. I will be there to state my position in adamant opposition to what I call total nonsense.

I consider this bill to be part of that nonsense, not a progressive move. When you start taking money away from the municipalities, you force the municipalities to either cut back services which are vital to people, or to raise user fees that do not take into account a person's ability to pay, or property taxes. That's a difference I pointed out.

The member for Northumberland said he saw people shopping in the malls during the Christmas period. I didn't think they could get that many bank presidents into the malls, and corporate giants, because that is who got the biggest tax cut: the people making the very most in our society. So we are increasingly providing one rule for the rich and the privileged and one for the rest, and this bill falls right into line with that, as all of my colleagues on this side have aptly pointed out.

**The Speaker:** Further debate?

**Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale):** I would like to start by asking for consent to split the lead-off time with my esteemed colleague, the critic for privatization, the member for Nickel Belt.

**The Speaker:** Is there agreement to allow the members on Riverdale and Nickel Belt to split their time? Agreed?

### *Interjections.*

**The Speaker:** I'll take that as agreement. The member for Riverdale.

**Ms Churley:** They certainly don't want to hear me droning on again for 90 minutes on an environmental bill.

First of all, in case I forget, I want to read a letter which I would like the parliamentary assistant to listen to. It's dated today and it says:

"Dear Minister,

"Re: Water and Sewage Services Improvement Act

"On behalf of the Canadian Environmental Law Association, I am writing to request that the so-called Water and Sewage Services Improvement Act, 1997, (Bill 107) be referred for committee hearings, assuming the bill receives second reading.

"In our view, the proposed legislation contains numerous flaws, raises numerous issues and is in dire need of substantial amendments if it proceeds. Accordingly, public scrutiny through committee hearings is both desirable and necessary.

"We look forward to your reply.

"Canadian Environmental Law Association

"Richard D. Lindgren," counsel to the Canadian Environmental Law Association.

I would note that some of the members from the resources committee and the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Environment and Energy, indeed the Minister of Environment and Energy himself, are very familiar with Mr Lindgren. I think he's a thorn in their side. They continue to try to avoid Mr Lindgren because he comes at this with absolutely no conflict. I say at the outset that I don't think Mr Lindgren has been suggested by members, not he specifically, but while I've been referring to environmentalists and environmental lawyers, that they get to make a lot of money out of these hearings and these processes, I would say that in the case of Mr Lindgren and most of the environmental lawyers I know who are working for non-profit, non-governmental agencies, they do not make a lot of money and are there solely to do what they can to improve the environment, which is what this organization has been doing for a number of years.

I very much hope that the government will agree to public hearings on this critical bill because this is part of the mega-week disaster that was announced a little while ago. I am sure the government thinks that people aren't going to pay attention, and do you know what? If we don't get this out to public hearings, I suppose there is a chance that will happen. I know the members here have not been paying a whole lot of attention to this debate and will continue not to pay a whole lot of attention to this debate. When people hear the words "sewer and water," their eyes glaze over. It sounds very boring.

Infrastructure decisions; who wants to hear that? Most people think when they turn on the tap, water comes out; when they flush the toilet, it disappears; and they believe their governments are protecting their water so that they will have clean water and safe water and a reliable water source. It is the one of the most fundamental services we have to sustain life. Along with the air we breathe and the food we eat, the water we drink is essential for our basic life.



When people hear the words "sewer and water," you should listen carefully. As my colleagues the member for Hamilton East and the member for St Catharines and our privatization critic, the member for Nickel Belt, will point out later in the week, this is really all about the privatization of water.

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The Minister of Environment last year, you will recall, had been quoted in the paper as saying that there was such an interest in the privatization of OCWA, our clean water agency, that he was being harassed at meetings by firms not only within Ontario and within Canada but from offshore, foreign companies, there is such interest in buying our water supply.

Why would that be? Obviously a huge profit can be made from selling water. They know that and the government knows that. They also know that it's going to cost a lot of money to fix up the aging infrastructure. They got a little worried and a little scared when there was such a big public outcry about selling off our water supply because polls show that over 70% of people want to keep our water in the public sphere.

What have they done? It's brilliant. You bring it in, Bill 107, as one of the mega-announcements. I listened very carefully to the parliamentary assistant and I took down a few notes and I'm going to just reiterate some of the things he said about this bill and dispute them.

First of all he said he's giving Ontario municipalities full title, that he's transferring responsibilities to the municipalities for septic system inspections and approval. He's saying that he is not forcing ownership. The local governments, on the whole, want the title and that will give them the flexibility to choose an operator that best services their needs. Then he goes on to say that the provincial government will concentrate on setting tough standards.

**Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'm rising on a point of order and I'm not sure that you'll be able to help me. I need to inform the House that the government House leader has just tabled a motion of time allocation on Bill 104, the education bill.

The problem I have is that we are in the middle of a series of discussions between House leaders and negotiations around the amount of time on hearings. I want you to know that what has been set out in this bill is four days for hearings in Toronto from 3:30 in the afternoon to 6 o'clock, which is 10 hours only over four days.

**The Speaker:** Order.

**Ms Lankin:** I'm sorry. I will try and keep this brief. I'm asking for your intervention at this point in time to call a meeting of House leaders because the process of discussion between the House leaders has completely broken down. We're unable to have any kind of discussion that facilitates the orderly processing of legislation and the participation of the public. I would ask you to please consider calling a meeting to see if we can resolve this.

**The Speaker:** The member for Beaches-Woodbine, I know you've been here a number of years and you know full well that the Speaker can't do that. It's not within my power. I can't convene a meeting of the House leaders.

I only deal with what I have that's put before me. I appreciate the concern you bring to this place, but again it's up to the House leaders to work it out. The government has rights and privileges and they've filed properly and there's nothing the Speaker can do, nor should do.

Member for Riverdale.

**Ms Churley:** That is just part and parcel of what this government is doing with this bill we're debating here today — and the education bill, all the controversial bills that are going to severely cut out democracy in this province, severely change people's lives, and this government continues to try to ram them through, and what's happening here today with this education bill — it's absolutely vital that it be debated across the province be done so.

What do they do today? They're hoping to get it out of the way while the big debate and the media interest are around Bill 103, the megacity stuff, so they can slip it under the rug so that people don't know what's going on. That is the despicable characteristic of this government in almost every bill we see before this House. They do not do public hearings unless — the Speaker is motioning to me to get back to this bill, which I will do.

But this is so typical, and I say again, speaking of Bill 107, I'm calling for substantive public hearings on that, because you are not going to slip through the privatization of the water that we need right under our noses without public hearings, and I'm going to demand that we be given those public hearings and substantive public hearings.

As I was saying, I was outlining some of the things that the esteemed parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Environment was talking about, and where I was, he was saying that the provincial government will concentrate on setting tough standards. Ha. You don't have any monitoring or inspection staff left.

Then he says they will attempt to prevent the selloff, demanding that anybody who bought a public facility and public dollars went into it would have to pay that back. Well, big deal. We all know what that means. It's a cost of doing business. We know the potential for making a lot of money by providing water services is phenomenal. That's not going to stop anybody. It is yet another shell game that's being played here, put in the terms of more efficiency, that it's all in chaos, it's all a mess and we'll just shove it all off to the municipalities while they're busy downloading so many other services.

Municipalities aren't going to have money to upgrade the system, to improve the system, to build new systems. They're not going to. You know it and I know it. Why don't we stop playing this silly game of pretending that you're going to try to protect our services and keep them in the public domain when we all know what this is really all about?

I have here a file full of press clips. My colleague the member for Nickel Belt will be getting more into the privatization aspect of this, but I'm going to tell you a little bit about what happened in England after Thatcher privatized the systems. And make no mistake. That is where we are heading. If this bill passes, that is where we are heading. Our water will be privatized.



We have headlines like "Profiteering Claims Mark British Privatization," "Water Scandal" — 480 homes cut off; 21,282 homes cut off; "BMA Calls for Ban on Water Disconnections." Do you know what was happening? This particular company was cutting off people who couldn't afford to pay their bills. There was actually a campaign in England to find a way to get poor children water, because their parents couldn't afford to pay, the rates went up so high, and poor children were going without water.

Listen to this one. "Water Staff is Told 'Abandon Uniform to Escape Attacks.'" That's because the water supplies and the droughts and the other problems with water provision in England got so bad that the workers had to or were told to stop wearing their uniforms, because they were afraid of attacks. That's how angry people were.

The Sunday Times: "Water Companies Exposed as Worst Polluters of River," "Scandal of the Filthy Rich Water Bosses," "How the Polluters Get Paid," "Privatized Water Firms Secretly Overcharge Customers by £280," and it goes on and on. The privatization of the water system in England was a complete disaster. The companies made a lot of money. The environment suffered. Poor children, poor families had to go without water. There were huge droughts. At one point in the middle of a big drought, companies, local industry, were told by the private firm that then owned the water company to move, to relocate.

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I'll tell you I think one of the funniest — and if it weren't so catastrophic in terms of what it did to people's lives it's very funny — this is the tale of Yorkshire Water, a private company in northern England. In the summer of 1995, a drought hit Yorkshire. From the middle of the summer until the end of the year, the water supply dwindled almost completely. What worsened the shortage was that the water company had failed to put any money back into the system to prepare for this drought. The waste of water, the leakage of water, amounted to about 360 million litres a day. This coincided with an announcement that the company had made an annual profit equivalent to \$360 million.

During this drought, there was a politician — I'm trying to find this here, because this is the funny part; I'll tell you while I'm trying to find it — who decided that one of the interesting things that some of the politicians told people in the middle of this drought was that they should stop taking baths or that they should share baths and they shouldn't drink any more than so much water a day. This particular politician went to the press and bragged about the fact that he hadn't taken a bath in three months. There's a picture — I can't find it here —

**Mr Laughren:** He was a Tory.

**Ms Churley:** He was a Tory too. This was a Tory government. He bragged about this, and there was even a picture.

**Mr Laughren:** But nobody noticed the difference.

**Ms Churley:** My colleague from Nickel Belt says it was a Tory and nobody noticed the difference. I'm glad the Speaker's not calling me to order on that, because of course it wasn't me who said it.

Anyway, he bragged about this and there was a little picture; he got big headlines in the newspaper. I think he was leaning over a sink with a little cup of water or something, showing how he washed with a little cup of water. He got a lot of press about this and he told everybody else: "Look, I can get by with only one bath every three months. Why don't you try it?" Then he got caught up in a very big scandal, because somebody caught him sneaking across the boundary into the riding where his mother lived and secretly taking showers at his mother's house. This became quite a scandal.

I'm going to talk a bit about what this bill is really doing besides privatization, because with privatization all of these things will happen and more. People will be paying a lot more for their water services, and I can assure you that there will be a lot of problems with the system.

What the government is really doing is not what the parliamentary assistant said at all. The government is leaving municipalities and their water supplies to the mercy of the private sector. What the Harris government has done already is cut off the capital grants for water and sewage infrastructure, and by selling OCWA now to the private sector — because that is what's going to happen. You can say, "No, no, no, we didn't do it; the municipalities did it," just like you're going to download everything else to the municipalities and then when there's trouble, say, "It wasn't us, it's them," but we know what's going to happen.

This bill tries to put on a pro public sector face. It says that if a municipality wants to sell its existing water or sewage plant to the private sector, it has to pay back all the grants. Well, I've already gotten into that. The payback is only on the face value of the grant, may I add, and there's no interest provision, no depreciation either. It's a giveaway, that's what it is, and they make it sound like they'll prevent privatization because private industry won't be able to afford it. It is a giveaway. It's like saying, "Here, come and take it."

The government is reacting to the public pressure it has experienced since our party, the Ontario Municipal Water Association and the Safe Ontario Water Coalition blew the whistle on the scandal of the private sector water in England, and because the vast majority of Ontarians want to keep our water public, they fixed it in such a way that the municipalities will have to take the heat. But as I said before, the municipalities will soon need new water and sewage infrastructure money. They may need to replace a treatment plant or need new pipes. This government, the Harris government, will not be there to help them, because you've already cancelled the grants. You're saying: "You're on your own. We're going to give you these plants. You have no option, you have to take them, but we're not going to give you any money." With the massive download to municipalities, you know they're not going to have the extra money and you know where they're going to have to turn.

You know exactly what's going to happen. We've had some small examples here in Ontario, like Philip Environmental in Hamilton, where there was a huge spill of sewage into the river.



The bill will also allow an open-ended transfer of regulation of water and sewer services to municipalities. With so much of the water system going private, the government must come up with ways to download this on to them. Now they're saying that they're coming up with a tough regulatory system to protect the consumer and the environment. It hasn't done so. It keeps doing this when it brings forward new environmental bills, "Oh, don't worry. We're going to toughen the regulations."

As I said before, we haven't seen what those are, but furthermore, the inspectors and the compliance officers have been cut back so drastically — and we fear that there's more to come — there won't be anybody there to inspect and monitor. We all know that. The municipalities aren't going to be able to afford to hire these people, and if it's left to the private sector, we know what the private sector's bottom line is. We've seen examples of that in Britain.

What else is in the bill? The liabilities will be transferred to the municipalities with the assets; they're getting not just the assets but all the liabilities as well. The parliamentary assistant and the minister haven't talked about these massive, multimillion-dollar liabilities.

The bill specifically relieves the crown of the obligation to construct, expand or finance the construction or expansion of water and sewage works under agreements that now exist. In other words, they're leaving municipalities hanging with all of the existing agreements that are out there. They are left completely hanging.

The bill transfers to municipalities most of the responsibility for regulating the construction and use of septic systems under part VIII of the Environmental Protection Act. We know that the Sewell report and the CMHC studies and other studies have documented the ground-water and surface water contamination caused by septic tanks. This is a serious environmental and health concern.

I hope the parliamentary assistant knows this and I hope he will go back to his minister and show him some of the studies that document the kind of groundwater contamination and surface water contamination caused by septic tanks. It's all the more reason that responsibility for regulating these and the construction and use of septic tanks must be controlled by the province.

You talk about it in terms of the same old thing — cutting red tape and trying to make the system more efficient — but what you are doing, once again, is downloading responsibilities which will end up being dealt with in a piecemeal way by municipalities, some of which won't be able to afford to deal with this very big problem.

I certainly will be bringing forward an amendment on that and I hope that there can be consideration and that the parliamentary assistant will take a look at some of the problems with septic tanks and their usage.

Municipalities are being forced by the government to take on a massive number of services at this time. We all know that they're going to be ill-equipped to take on this new and completely vital service and responsibility at the same time that they are being forced to take on the public housing business, the assessment business, the business of welfare — a big one — long-term care, all of these things. All the municipalities in Ontario, all of them, even

the friends of the government — AMO, Tory mayors and politicians all across the province — are telling this government that already with the downloading they know about, they can't afford to pay for those without raising taxes significantly. Now the government is also downloading the huge and expensive responsibility for dealing with our septic and sewage systems.

1750

The other issue I'm going to cover briefly today is the role of OCWA. OCWA was created under our government and it is an example of the benefits of the partnership between the public sector and the private sector. I have no problem with these kinds of partnerships. I think they make sense. There are a lot of ways that the government can work together with the private sector to enhance the services we provide, to make them less expensive. There's a way that everybody can win in these kinds of public-private partnerships.

The government in the meantime is not only now breaking up and getting rid of OCWA and that partnership, downloading the responsibilities to municipalities, which will be forced to privatize, but it has also cancelled money for capital expenditures. As I've said, the agreement's already made. They are left hanging. They don't know where the money's going to come from.

Wise water use, conservation, is completely gone. That's one of the things our NDP government, under OCWA, the partnership with the private sector, had some control over. That's gone now. One of the things we insisted on was that water conservation, water efficiency, the wise use of this precious resource, be taken into account when a municipality came to the province to ask for money to build or expand new systems.

One example is that in 1994, Barrie wanted a \$42-million expansion. What happened is that OCWA and the green community got together and formed a partnership. You all know about the green community programs which were established under our government to promote energy efficiency and water efficiency within our communities. It created a lot of jobs. They went into people's homes, inspected their homes and gave people information about how to be more efficient. It created jobs and saved people a lot of money down the road and also was good for local small business. Of course this government is no longer supporting that.

Some, I'm happy to say, again with the assistance of their municipality — I know the city of Toronto has one of the very many innovative environmental programs that the city was very involved in, along with the energy conservation office and many more. Of course that's all going to disappear too if the government goes ahead with the amalgamation bill the way it is now.

Back to the green communities. When this existed, OCWA formed a partnership with them, and this request for the \$42-million expansion was reduced to \$29.3 million. This was done by getting together in this partnership and figuring out how to conserve water. So not only was a lot of money saved to the government, to Barrie, because these were partnerships, but indeed a lot of water was conserved at the same time.

Just recently we heard that on top of the 752 people, I believe, already laid off at the Ministry of Environment



and the massive amount of money that's been cut, we've also heard that the number of water monitoring stations has fallen from nearly 700 in 1991 to just over 200 in 1996. In the 1996 work year, the ministry did no surface water monitoring at all north of Barrie, where the majority of watercourses are located.

We pointed out last year — I guess a couple of years ago, shortly after they got in government — that MAP, the municipal assistance program, was cancelled by this government. That program helped farmers in rural areas to prevent the runoff from going into the drinking water supply. It was a very inexpensive but effective program. All the water conservation programs and efficiency programs and wise water use programs and programs to prevent contaminants from getting into our drinking water were cancelled by this government.

Now they're getting out of the water business completely. I don't think the members from the caucus really know what's going on. I think most people, when I started speaking today, when they hear about water and sewage their eyes glaze over. It's not a sexy subject. People don't really want to hear a lot of details about it. It's there, it sounds like just a lot of infrastructure talk that most people associate with boring stuff. But when people realize that what we're talking about is that the very water we drink and rely on may be in jeopardy here, that the government, through this bill, is putting municipalities in a position where not only some of them I'm sure will want to sell but many of them will feel compelled to sell because they don't have any choice — it's wrong. It's just plain wrong.

I've been on my feet in this House talking numerous times, at great length, about the kinds of things that this government is doing to environmental protection, therefore affecting human health in our province. They don't listen to me. Okay, I'm a member of the opposition, and I know there's some suspicion that it may be partisan rhetoric. I accept that. But they also don't listen to the experts in the field, in this case not just Mr Lindgren, whom the government mostly holds a fair amount of contempt for because he really gets under their skin.

We have organizations like the Ontario Municipal Water Association calling for public hearings and being very concerned. We have people like that talking about the concern they have about the privatization of water. Don Black from the Ontario Municipal Water Association says:

"We believe the government is opening the floodgates to the irreversible deterioration of water services in Ontario. It's a situation that is transforming Ontario's reliable and safe water service into one marked by chaos and fragmentation. The government clearly has no plan to safeguard our drinking water and to ensure the high quality, low cost and reliable water system we enjoy today."

They're very worried about what's going to happen to our water system.

The government members here today should go away and take a — there's no point in actually reading the bill. The bill doesn't tell you very much. If you don't have very much background or expertise in this area, you'd read this bill and you wouldn't have a clue what was going on. A lot is going to be done by regulation later, but it doesn't make sense to people who don't know the issue. I don't even recommend that you read the bill. I suggest you talk to people from, say, the municipal association and ask them to explain to you what's going on in this bill. Talk to experts in the field. Find out what's really happening here. I think that some of you will change your minds about supporting this bill. Don't just take it for granted. Every word I heard from the parliamentary assistant today was nonsense; it's not what's really going on here. It's very frustrating to hear the same kind of cover-up we keep hearing about all these bills that are actually going to hugely impact people's lives in a negative way.

Mr Speaker, it being almost 6 of the clock, I will continue my discussion when we get back to this bill later on in the week.

**The Speaker:** It now being nearly 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 11 o'clock tomorrow morning.

*The House adjourned at 1800.*



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No. 158

N° 158

ISSN 1180-2987

## Legislative Assembly of Ontario

First Session, 36th Parliament

## Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

Première session, 36<sup>e</sup> législature

# Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

# Journal des débats (Hansard)

Thursday 6 February 1997

Jeudi 6 février 1997



Speaker  
Honourable Chris Stockwell

Président  
L'honorable Chris Stockwell

Clerk  
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier  
Claude L. DesRosiers



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# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 6 February 1997

# ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 6 février 1997

*The House met at 1100.  
Prayers.*

## PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

### SCHOOL CLASS SIZES ACT, 1997

### LOI DE 1997 SUR LA TAILLE DES CLASSES SCOLAIRES

Mr Bartolucci moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 110, An Act respecting the number of pupils that may be enrolled in a school class / Projet de loi 110, Loi concernant le nombre d'élèves pouvant être inscrits dans une classe scolaire.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin):** Pursuant to standing order 96(c)(i), the member has 10 minutes for his presentation.

**Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury):** First of all I think it would be important for members of the House to understand that we clearly feel there is a need for this bill. The way we arrived at the need was to sample throughout Ontario some class sizes which are not unusual. We tried to stay away from unusual examples, classrooms that had over 40 students. We tried to stay away from the sensationalism of enormous class sizes because we believe we can make a case for what is really out there needing change to be more effective in our educational system.

As we sampled throughout the province, the following numbers were not unusual: in a grade 1 class, 37 students; in a grade 2 class, 39; in a split grade 2 and 3, 34; in a grade 3 class, 39; in a split grade 3 and 4, which is a very difficult split because you're moving from the end of the primary division into the first year of the junior division, it is not unusual to find numbers such as 35 and 37 students; in grade 4, 37; in grade 5, 37 pupils in a classroom; in grade 6, 36 pupils; in a split grade 6 and 7, another very difficult split because you're at the end of the junior division and in the first year of the intermediate division, we find class sizes of 38; in grade 7, 37; in grades 7 and 8, 35; in grade 8, 36.

In high school: grade 9 history advanced classes of 36; grade 10 geography general classes of 36; grade 11 phys ed classes of 29; grade 12 English advanced classes of 38.

Clearly we feel there is a need to ensure that these types of classes do not, cannot and must not become the norm in Ontario.

We also looked at some statistics. We found that between 1991 and 1995 the number of classrooms in Ontario diminished from 42,640 to 39,862 at the elementary level, which is a decrease of 2,728 classrooms.

At the same time we found that at every grade level in the elementary division there was an increase in the pupil-teacher ratio, that the average class sizes in each elementary class throughout Ontario increased: at the junior kindergarten level, a 7.3% increase; kindergarten, an 8.5% increase; grade 1, a 6% increase; grade 2, a 5.7% increase; grade 3, a 6.4% increase; grade 4, a 4.8% increase; grade 5, a 4.7% increase; grade 6, 5%; grade 7, 4.6%; and grade 8, 4%. We've also found that the number of classrooms in Ontario is decreasing and the number of students in those classrooms is increasing. In other words, there is a greater number of students in individual classes all over Ontario.

I think it is most important for members of the House to understand that classroom makeup has changed over the course of the last five, six, seven years. Certainly, all classrooms have too many students in them. These students come at varying ability levels. In some classrooms you're going to have three, four, five and in some instances even six different ability levels, six different groups. At the same time, you're going to find in each of those classrooms individuals who have identified learning exceptionalities which require the teacher to address these exceptionalities on an individual basis. That is the standard in Ontario classrooms nowadays. That's the reality in Ontario classrooms nowadays. There are more identified exceptionalities in these classes, and teachers must spend individual time with each of these exceptionalities to ensure that their potential is maximized.

Clearly the bill is intended to affect the students of Ontario. I make no apologies for that. What is the thrust of the bill? I make no apologies for that either. The thrust of the bill is clearly to limit classroom sizes in this province. Studies and experience show that classroom sizes have a clear and direct influence on how much students learn, the kinds of skills they learn and the kinds of programs in which they can engage and flourish. There is a direct correlation between that, and I'm sure other speakers will expand on that a little later on. Specific, clearly defined caps on the number of students per classroom are important. It is unacceptable that any pupil in this province should be in a class of 40 or more students.

I think it is important for the House to realize as well that we didn't just gather this information or these numbers holus-bolus. We met extensively with teacher groups. We met extensively with parent groups. We studied provincial data. We studied the many studies that have been published with regard to class sizes. We ensured that we met with student groups to find out what their feelings are.

I tried to make this as apolitical as possible, so I moved away from Sudbury and northern Ontario. I concentrated on areas not held by Liberal Party members.



I concentrated on Halton Centre, Wentworth North, Kitchener-Wilmot and Durham-York because two of the members are directly connected with the Ministry of Education and the other two areas are held by members who were teachers previous to their election as MPPs.

1110

It was amazing what we found. We found that there is consensus across this province that class sizes are just too large. In closing, let me read you just a few quotes.

The School Class Sizes Act "guarantees that each student in our province will at long last receive the attention that each one deserves. Unless a guarantee is put in place restricting the classroom size, students will lose out again." That's a comment from a school trustee.

"As a father of children in the primary division this act guarantees my children will not be placed in conditions so crowded that optimum learning does not take place." That's from a father of two, Peter Martikainen.

Laurel McCaig, a teacher, writes: "My experience teaching in larger classes has convinced me of the limitations of such an environment. The noise level and the extent to which class control cuts into class time places significant limitations on the amount of work and the types of projects in which the students can engage. Limited class sizes would be a welcome step forward."

Finally, from a student: "I only wish in my earlier years that I had class sizes that are reflected in your bill. It would have allowed me to develop my individuality to a greater degree."

Ladies and gentlemen of the Legislature, the government has stressed that its goal is to improve classroom education. What better way of doing that than to ensure that classroom sizes do not grow to levels that threaten the quality of education? I believe that should be the goal of all three parties, of every member in this House.

We don't have to demonstrate it in a political way; we can demonstrate it in a very practical and realistic way by ensuring that the number of students in each classroom in Ontario reflects the optimum opportunity to enhance individual potential, to ensure, as Mike Harris once said, we must prepare our students for the 21st century. I have no problem with that. I agree with him. As a teacher with 30 years' experience, I too want to ensure that our children are prepared for the 21st century.

One of the most profound ways of ensuring that preparation takes place is to ensure that each individual student in Ontario, whether they be in junior kindergarten or in the final year of high school, has the opportunity to learn in an environment which is conducive to maximum potential development.

**Mr Terence H. Young (Halton Centre):** I'm pleased to participate in this debate. This bill addresses an issue that is close to the heart of every caring person in Ontario: quality of education. We're taking action to improve the quality in education at less cost to the taxpayer. We're focusing resources where they should be, in the classroom. Our reforms are designed to help teachers teach and to help learners learn.

I appreciate that Bill 110 is motivated by that priority and I applaud its good intentions. I totally support the bill's underlying principle of ensuring that there be more resources directed to the classroom, but I cannot support

this bill as an appropriate or effective tool to realize that principle.

I appreciate the intent of the bill to direct resources to the classroom and provide a better environment for learning for teachers and students. However, I must advise the members that I see significant problems with the bill's proposals, problems that would severely undermine the bill's own good intentions: First, it will limit the ability of school boards, school councils and schools to determine how best to direct their resources; second, it will result in significant additional cost to schools; and third, its approach is too simplistic and narrow.

Bill 110 would effectively be a straitjacket, because it denies schools the flexibility to choose how to provide the best service to their students. For example, less than half of elementary classrooms in the province currently exceed the proposed maximum. In general, they exceed the maximum only slightly. For example, some classes average 27 students, which would be two students too many if the bill became law.

If a maximum class size were legislated, a school would need to create a second class, one for 25 students in order to meet the maximum allowed by Bill 110 and another for the remaining two students, or the school could divide up the 27 in a more logical fashion, such as 14 in one and 13 in the other, effectively creating upheaval for all 27 students. There would be new rooms, new faces, a new teacher for half of the students, new relationships and a disruption of their studies. The principal might have to get on the phone and order in a new portable, which is effectively not possible in many parts of Ontario midwinter.

This kind of one-size-fits-all administration is not the kind of approach that is consistent with local responsibility. Local school boards, school councils and schools need room to make decisions about resource management, to be effective and efficient, to make decisions that will serve students best, according to their individual needs, taking into account their age, their subject matter of study and the community environment, including the community of the school itself.

Schools must have the power to respond quickly to the needs of students and parents. Anyone who has ever worked in a school for any length of time will know that. Students often move between schools in the middle of the year, and students also move between courses in the middle of the year. But the narrow focus of Bill 110 does not recognize that mobility, doesn't recognize that mobility is a fact of our everyday life. A student could be kept out of a course in their own school because the class size was already at maximum and physical space or teachers were not available to create another class.

Earlier I mentioned costs. In the examples I've raised, schools and school boards would have major expenses to keep class sizes below Bill 110's limit: spending to hire more classroom teachers, spending to find space to accommodate more classes. For example, if a student sought entrance to a course midyear that she or he had begun in another school and if that course were at its maximum enrolment, the student would be denied access. Alternatively, if the school were forced to set up an additional class midyear to accommodate the new student,



the costs would be very high, perhaps forcing principals or boards to cancel some meaningful programs or extra-curricular activities such as a band or choir performance, support of the drama club or sports activities. This issue of cost must be of concern to all members.

It's also important to recognize that the issue of class size cannot be addressed in isolation, as it is in this bill. Teachers have told me that it's not so much the issue of class size as of the skills and aptitudes of the children in those classes; for example, students with special needs who require different approaches and special assistance. Local teachers and principals are the only ones who can address those kinds of situations to take into account the best interests of our children.

Let me give you another example: Class size can have an impact on funding. We're in the process of developing a new model for allocating money to school boards with the goal of ensuring that a higher proportion of resources goes into the classroom. The focus of that process will be helping children learn. Our decision will be guided by the belief that local school boards and schools should exercise their judgement of how that is best achieved.

In conclusion, I recognize the principle that motivates this bill. Supporting teachers in their very important work and directing more resources to the classroom are not only goals that we share, they're issues on which this government is taking action. This bill, however, takes too simplistic and narrow an approach. In the final analysis, it cannot do what it should and it may even create significant obstacles to quality education and create hardship for individual students and their families. It would not deliver significant benefit but it surely would impose significant costs.

I respectfully ask the members then not to support the bill, but at the same time recognize that the intent of focusing resources in the classroom is certainly a priority for the government. We are acting on that priority and we will achieve our common goal of quality education.

1120

**Mrs Lyn McLeod (Fort William):** I believe this is a bill that puts to the test this government's so-called commitment to classroom education, because this bill is all about kids in a classroom; make no mistake about that. This bill is about what can be done to ensure that children in a classroom get a reasonably fair chance at a good education. The whole intent is to make sure that no government, whether it is a local government or the provincial government, forces students into classes of as many as 40, where in my home community some students have to sit on buckets because there are no desks for them in the classroom.

The bill sets maximum class sizes so that we would no longer see elementary school students in classes of as many as 32, where there might be 10 students with special needs in that group of 32 students. There surely is no debate about the importance of class size to effective teaching and to student learning, and that is particularly true to individualized learning, because teachers in a large class can't do anything but teach to the average student. There's no time to respond to individual needs. There's no time to test students to determine what each

individual student knows and what that student needs to learn next.

I was proud to be part of a government that made children and classroom education a real priority and that put dollars behind its commitment, paid in full to keep a commitment that would keep class sizes in grades 1 and 2 to a maximum of 24 students. I was privileged to have been part of building an educational system that believed that every child had a place in the classroom on an integrated basis, and I will never deny or apologize for the increased spending that that commitment to integration entailed.

So no wonder spending costs for education went up, because they supported a belief in early childhood education with junior kindergarten funding. They supported a belief in lower class sizes in grades 1 and 2 by funding maximum class sizes in those grades, and they supported integrated education even for those students with special needs and provided the dollars to support those students in an integrated class.

I don't expect that this government will support the bill because, although the minister talks about the importance of putting resources into the classroom, we know that the goal of the minister, the real goal, is to cut spending. The minister claims he wants to see student achievement improved, but his only initiatives have been to cut supports to learning, from cutting the funding for junior kindergarten to the \$9.9 million he wants to take out of classroom supplies and equipment in order to supposedly get some savings from amalgamating school boards.

If you buy into what the ministry and the Minister of Education are saying about spending too much on education, you won't support this bill. If you believe that Ontario's students should somehow be dropped to the point where they are below our national average in the support that we provide, then you won't support this bill. But if the government members do not support this bill, we will be back to ask what class sizes are going to be the basis for the funding that the Ministry of Education provides to each school board on a per pupil basis, because when this government carries through its intent to amalgamate school boards and take over educational funding, it will be responsible for what goes on in the classroom. It will not be able to blame large class sizes on local school boards, because the ministry will have determined what funding it gives that makes those class sizes a reality. And it won't be able to blame local school boards for the fact that special education support is no longer being provided, because those will be decisions that are the responsibility of the Minister of Education, who wants control over educational funding and who is going to get it and who will have to live with that responsibility.

If the government were to agree that good education, effective teaching and effective learning begin with reasonable class sizes so that there can be a good interaction between the teacher and each of that teacher's students, then the government would support this bill and would have a clear basis for determining the funding that supports that most important priority of class sizes of a reasonable level.



Again, I am not optimistic that the government will support the bill because I don't think we have seen a government that truly values education. We've seen a government that is prepared to take \$1 billion out of education, to cut junior kindergarten funding, that is ready now to reduce the number of hours that go into teaching English. It is ready to put students into work experiences that have nothing to do with academic learning and are unsupervised.

This would be a starting point for the government to say they are truly committed to children in a classroom, and I hope the government members will see the bill in that light.

**Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South):** I rise today to speak in favour of this bill on behalf of the New Democratic Party, and I would like to set out some of the logic of why that is.

First of all, what is the member for Sudbury, Mr Bartolucci, trying to do? He's trying to put into legislation something that is now in most cases protected by collective agreements between teachers and school boards. As it is right now in those collective agreements, class size is an issue in some cases that's dealt with within the collective agreements to make sure that we don't have too many kids in the care of teachers and to keep those class sizes within manageable areas.

Why is he doing this? Why is the member bringing forward this particular legislation? It's fairly clear. The government has decreed that it's going to follow a certain direction in education. It's doing a couple of things.

First, it's taking over the entire funding of our education system and taking over the entire control so that later on down the road, as they take the control, they're going to be able to make some fundamental changes to education. At the same time that goes on, the Minister of Education's personal friend Mr Paroian is out there looking at what they're going to do when they get their hands on the education system.

What is one of the things they're going to want to do? They're going to want to be able to get to the collective agreements of teachers. What is inside the collective agreement of teachers but classroom size, preparation time, all of those issues that the Conservatives would like us to believe really don't have anything to do with classroom expenditures, but we know that they do.

The member for Sudbury is trying to bring this particular private member's bill to the House because he recognizes, as we do in the New Democratic Party of Ontario, that the real agenda of the government is to take over the control of financing of education and directing it so they can make those fundamental changes that are going to allow them to change education as we know it today, and one of the things they want to do is reduce expenditures overall within education.

What do you do if you take \$1 billion or \$2 billion out of education? Where do you save the money? The government will make you believe that they can take that amount of money out of education and it can be done strictly through administration of school boards, it can be done strictly through cutting things that are not in the classroom. The reality is that 80% of what we spend in education goes directly to the classroom. The minute you

start taking large sums of money out of our education system, you know darn well it is going to affect the classroom. One of the things that is going to have to be effected if you're going to be able to offset those cuts is to increase the amount of students per teacher, and this is what the member is trying to affect with this particular bill.

I want to commend the member for at least trying to bring this issue forward. What he's trying to say is, let's put some legislation in place so at least we're able to protect the classroom size to a certain degree. Now, I have a bit of difference about how many students per class and all that, and I think we can get into that debate if we get to committee, but in general I support it.

I also want to say quickly from the comments I heard from the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Education, his speech came down to two things. He said, "We as a government, we the Conservative government of Ontario, want to focus our resources in the classroom." If you're truly serious about that as Conservatives, why wouldn't you support this bill? What you would be doing by supporting this bill would be keeping to your commitment that you want to protect the classroom. If you vote against this bill, it tends to tell me that you're really not serious in your commitment about protecting the classroom. Because you know and I know and, more important, you out there know that where most of the money is spent is in teachers' wages and the number of students that you have per teacher is a great effect of how much we spend in the classroom.

The second thing that the member said, the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Education — the same Minister of Education who didn't graduate high school and, in my view, doesn't have a respect for the education system that we have in this province, the same minister who said, when he was first sworn in as Minister of Education —

*Interjection.*

**The Deputy Speaker:** The member for Nepean.

1130

**Mr Bisson:** "I will create a crisis in education so that I can make the changes that need to be done in education," said the Minister of Education.

*Interjection.*

**The Deputy Speaker:** The member for Halton North.

**Mr Bisson:** The same Minister of Education who at every opportunity has taken a slap at the teachers, has taken a slap at our public system of education, is trying to make people in this province believe that our education system is broke and it don't work. Well, that isn't the case. Sure, there are problems in our education system, as there are in every kind of private sector enterprise, as there are in every public sector enterprise. You can always strive to make things better. But this Minister of Education is trying to make us believe that our system of public education doesn't work.

I beg to differ. We have a good system of public education that has been recognized as being one of the best in the world. We have school boards in this province which have been awarded awards, that are recognized nationally and internationally as being some of the best



educational programs in the world, and this minister has the gall to say publicly that our system doesn't work.

The parliamentary assistant said he was not going to support this bill, and he was urging his fellow Conservative members in his caucus, right-wing Republican Conservatives that they are, that they shouldn't support this bill. Why? Because it was too simple and narrow in its approach.

*Interjection.*

**The Deputy Speaker:** The member for Perth.

**Mr Bisson:** Who is more simplistic and who is more narrow than the Conservative Party of Ontario today? In everything they have done, from the mega-city to Bill 104 and the restructuring of school boards, to their approach through Bill 26 and their gutting of the labour laws through Bill 7, through absolutely every piece of legislation and every change in regulation, this has been a government that is simplistic and narrow in its approach.

That's what your philosophy is. I've just given you another reason why you should support the bill from the member for Sudbury. If you don't, it means you're not going to live up to your commitment and that the real agenda here is that you want to take over education so you can give it a good kick and change it into a system of education where if you've got money, you go to a private charter school, and if you don't got money, you go to a public school that is underfunded, understaffed and with class sizes that are much larger than what could be sustained for a good system of public education.

For those reasons, I will be supporting the member's bill.

**Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland):** Thank you for the opportunity to speak on this particular bill. The bill that's being proposed by the member for Sudbury is certainly very honourable and very motherhood, but it certainly takes the responsibility away from the present school boards. I appreciate Mr Bartolucci's concern for class size, but I must oppose his private member's bill on some very basic principles.

Quite simply, we are looking for better results from our education system, not more regulations and bureaucratic process. That principle has been clearly stated by the Minister of Education. This government is indeed committed to bringing greater accountability to public schools within a framework of stakeholder involvement, regular testing and a common curriculum.

It's been said that education is the only industry left where if you do a good job, nothing good happens to you, and if you do a bad job, nothing bad happens to you. I believe the introduction of province-wide student testing will change that by promoting greater accountability to the people who are served.

That said, I also believe school boards must have the freedom and flexibility to negotiate class sizes and manage in the new environment. They must have the freedom to work with different approaches to education within basic guidelines and the flexibility to accommodate change in Ontario's schools and classrooms. Only then will we be able to find out what really works and to encourage innovation and excellence in our public school system.

This bill seeks to bring greater regulation to the classroom, not less. It is based on an outdated model of command and control. Instead, our government is taking a different approach. We are seeking a model of education that focuses on results rather than on compliance with endless rules and regulations.

On a number of occasions the Minister of Education has said he is considering giving more authority to our school councils. That, I believe, is a good thing. Study after study has shown that greater parental involvement translates directly to better student achievement.

I believe the issue of class size is something that should remain the responsibility of the local school authorities, with the direct input of teachers and parent councils. By providing more decision-making responsibility at the school site, we will make education more responsive to the people it serves. If class size in a particular school is having a negative impact on student achievement, consistent and regular testing will identify the problem. Steps can then be taken to resolve the issue. Regular student testing and reporting of school achievement is something on which this government has already taken decisive action. I believe that with benchmarking we will make it easier to identify problems, while making Ontario's school system more transparent to those who foot the bill.

In his letter to members of this House, the member for Sudbury asked us to seek input from educators, students and parents. In my riding we did just that about nine months ago when we went to the public seeking feedback on the Sweeney report. In my discussions with education stakeholders and in my subsequent report to the minister, I identified the concerns from my constituency regarding education. I would like to briefly share some of those results with you today.

During our discussions a great deal of concern was expressed about the ultimate quality of education that students receive in Ontario. All groups participating — parents, municipal politicians, students and educators — wanted a strong common curriculum, regular student testing and greater accountability and community control of our education system.

That is indeed what we are moving towards: a school system that promotes more local control, accountability and excellence in the classroom. I urge the member sponsoring the bill to have some patience while these changes are being implemented.

While I agree that class size is a valid and serious concern, I believe it will be addressed when individual school and school board results are published and held up to regular public scrutiny. With the greater involvement of parents, teachers and community groups, that is what we are working towards. With these new systems in place, I am confident that class size will not be permitted to have a negative impact on student performance.

In the last minute and a half, I'd like to relate to Mr Bartolucci some delegations that have come to my office. One was some parents and teachers from a school where there was a class size over 40. I asked them: "If the class size is over 40 in that school, and last year the PTR or pupil-teacher ratio went from 16.5 to 17, I would like to know where the teachers are. Are they facilitators,



consultants, superintendents or directors? Are they on prep time?" I don't know. The answer never came back.

I had another president of OSSTF, of a secondary school in my area, come to me saying that the class size from last year to this year increased on average in that school by three students. The PTR, pupil-teacher ratio, went from 14.9 to 15.2, an increase of 0.3 students, but the students went up by three in the classroom. Again, I asked that individual, that president: "Where are the teachers? Are they facilitators? Are they consultants? Where are the teachers? Why did we move up an average of three students per classroom when the PTR only changed by 0.3?"

The responsibility has to lie with that school board and it should be answering to the public and to us what has happened when the number of students enrolled per class has gone up that far. I think that's where our problem lies. There's a lack of accountability with our boards, with this kind of class size and with this PTR and how it rolls out in our class size.

1140

**Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre):** I'm pleased to speak to a very important bill, Bill 110, this morning, on an issue that I believe is absolutely fundamental to education. I will attempt to provide not a partisan view at all, but some statistics and some research that I think speak eloquently to the issue.

It's a well-known fact that class size is a key indicator, and every member who has spoken to this has said that. The Royal Commission on Learning, for example, reinforced this point in its report, *For the Love of Learning*.

I'd like to address the points made by the member for Northumberland and the member for Halton Centre.

I want to tell you about a four-year research project that was done in Tennessee. It was called STAR, which stands for student-teacher achievement ratio. The research, one of the most comprehensive studies in educational history, was led by Tennessee State University's centre of excellence. The STAR project is considered to be the ground-breaking research into the effects of classroom size in the early grades on academic achievement and the reduction of disruptive behaviour.

Spearheaded by the governor of Tennessee, STAR was the biggest-ever educational research project in the United States and involved 6,500 children over a four-year period from 1985 to 1989 throughout the whole state of Tennessee. Their progress and achievements were measured with frequent tests of basic skills and comparisons against statewide and national standards.

These children performed dramatically better when classroom sizes were reduced from kindergarten through to grade 3. The results of the study, which were published in 1990, produced such convincing evidence in favour of reduced class size that the Legislature of Tennessee voted two years later to make small classes an educational priority throughout the state. So compelling was the evidence for small classes that all schools in the state, beginning with the most disadvantaged, had class sizes reduced to a maximum of 20 students in the early grades.

Nationwide, in Canada, Statistics Canada keeps statistics on the per pupil ratio, the pupil-educator ratio, which

is the ratio of full-time pupils to all certified educators. To be included the educator must have a teaching certificate. Thus, any board-level employee with a teaching certificate, including superintendents and consultants, would be included in this particular ratio, and the member for Northumberland just talked about this. In 1993, the average for Canada as a whole was 15.7 pupils per educator, but Ontario was slightly lower than the national average, at 15.3 pupils per educator.

It is thought that the lower PER changes in Ontario resulted from the provincial Liberal government decision under David Peterson to lower grade 1 and grade 2 class sizes to a maximum of 20 students. We know that has now changed. Other factors include expansion of special education programs and an increase in the number of administrators and consultants serving school boards.

What has happened since then will not surprise you: The phasing in of class size reductions in grades 1 and 2 has slowed down, and despite the compelling evidence of research on the effects of classroom size, Ontario continues to cut funds to education, forcing boards to increase class sizes. I know that in Ottawa-Carleton class sizes have been steadily increasing.

In a new release this week from the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation, it was reported that "according to the most recent data available...Ontario is now in 45th place in class size when ranked with the American states." Further, in the ranking of Ontario per pupil expenditure, compared to American and Canadian jurisdictions, we're in 46th place, not a place to be happy about. Budget cuts in education are affecting the classroom and in particular classroom size, an important key indicator. The Royal Commission on Learning believed we have the capacity to forge an excellent educational system, and I do too, but not the way we're proceeding at the moment.

I heard Dan Offord interviewed on CBC yesterday morning. Dr Offord is the principal author of the Ontario Child Health Study and currently research director of the Centre for Studies of Children at Risk at McMaster University. He spoke about the importance of the early years and what is important to raise a generation of healthy, happy and productive children and youth. All children require love, nurturing and guidance within the supportive environments of home, school and the community to attain their individual potential. What is most important is that there's a relationship with the teacher that is a personal one, so that the teacher may be able to respond to the needs of those children.

I could go on and on, but my time is up. I am happy to be supporting my colleague's bill. It's very important for all Ontario.

**Mr Floyd Laughren (Nickel Belt):** I rise in support of this bill of my colleague the member for Sudbury and I applaud him for his initiative in bringing it forward. It's clear from the short speeches we've had in the assembly this morning that the government members, who of course have the majority, are not going to be supporting Mr Bartolucci's bill. I regret that because it's an opportunity to have a further debate, an ongoing debate about our education system in this province.



I find it passing strange that at the very time the Minister of Education is decrying the quality of education and the ability of our students to rank higher in national competition, he's cutting expenditures in education and reducing expenditures that affect and impact directly on the classroom as well, despite the promise not to do that. I personally don't have any problem with the reduction in the number of school boards — I think that's overdue — but I sure have a problem with the way in which some of the cuts are going to impact on the classroom.

I heard the member from Halton-Foxfire — sorry, Halton Centre — comment that he was opposed to this because it would prevent the school boards from deciding where they'd direct their costs. Well, of course it would. It would prevent the school boards from saying, "We're going to save money and make up for the provincial cuts by increasing the size of the classes to more than 30, or perhaps even 40." I really didn't understand his comment that if you had 27 students and the limit was 26, you then would have 26 in one class and one in the other. That really is strange mathematics.

The trouble is that if you allow it to be 10%, give or take, above the maximum, then you know and I know what would happen: That would become the minimum if you allowed that. So at some point you have to get arbitrary in this system and set a limit, and that's what the member for Sudbury is trying to do.

I think it was the member for Northumberland who said there would be no significant benefits if this bill was implemented, just additional costs. What a categorical statement that is. Does he really believe that if you set a ceiling on the number of students per class, there's no benefit to the students in those classes? Of course there is. Every knowledgeable person, people who know a lot more about education than I, will tell you that the size of the class does have a very direct bearing on the quality of education in that classroom, and in particular in the lower grades, in the elementary school system. I always felt that if we were going to put any more money into the education system, it should be at the elementary level, because those really are the formative years, and any study I've ever read has reinforced that view.

I'm pleased to play a small part in this debate this morning and support the initiative by the member for Sudbury.

**Mr Frank Mclash (Kenora):** I too would like to indicate my support for the member for Sudbury's bill this morning. As we know, he has spent a great number of years in the field of education and knows of what he speaks in terms of the education our children are receiving in this province.

More importantly, I think we have to take a look at what's happening in terms of a particular classroom today. As a former educator myself in those classrooms, and as the member representing the area of Kenora now, I spend a lot of time going into the classrooms, into the schools to find out what's happening on the front line. We have a minister who often speaks about not harming what's happening in the classrooms, but we have a minister who as well does not seem to know what's going on in those classrooms.

I made a recent visit to St Joseph's school in Dryden, only last Friday, where I was invited by the principal, Dixie Whiteside, to address her staff. They made it very clear to me that the Minister of Education and Training must become more involved in what's going on, that when he speaks about a computer on every desk, he must also remember that we need socialization in the classroom, which is very important. I think this bill speaks directly to that in terms of numbers. Previous speakers have indicated that a great number of studies have suggested that numbers are directly related to the socialization a child is going to receive at whatever grade level.

1150

Again I go back to the fact that we have a minister here who does not seem to be getting the message, whether it be from trustees, from parents, from those people who appear in the classroom every day, the teachers. I can only suggest to him that he must pay a little bit more attention to what is being said out there.

Yes, we agree that changes have to be made, and I go back to the members and the bill in terms of the research that's been done in this area. I think this is a very good opportunity for every member in the House to begin those changes, which have a good amount of substance to back them up.

You listen to a teacher who faces anywhere from 35 to 40 students in a classroom, and quite often a good number of those students are special needs students as well or students who need enrichment, and we often hear about students who don't get the enrichment they need. A teacher being asked to address all those various needs in a group of 35 to 40 students I think is going beyond what our very dedicated teachers are requested to do presently. I think we have to take a close look at the research, a close look at what the bill intends to do. It's just an excellent start to move ahead in terms of ensuring that our students are getting the proper education.

When I go into the schools, teachers ask me what this government is all about when it comes to education. I've had to come to the conclusion that it's not really the education of our students in the province that the government seems to be concentrating on, it's more the bottom line and, "Where can we get those dollars to ensure that every person in the province is going to receive that tax cut?" which the Premier has offered. Whether it be health care, whether it be education, which we're speaking about today, the Premier has one goal in mind, and that's the bottom line. We see that affecting all the ministries, and I think it's really upsetting for those people who are on the front line, whether it be the teachers, the trustees or those who are involved in education — very frustrating. Now they're faced with a government which doesn't show interest, doesn't seem to be listening to what they're saying.

As you know, individual members will have to make up their minds in terms of what they're going to do, whether they're going to support this bill or not support it. I would certainly urge every member of the House to take a very close look. This has been a beginning to ensure that our future generations have the education that will meet their needs.



**Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre):** I appreciate this opportunity to join in the debate and would like to begin by complimenting my colleague Mr Bartolucci on Bill 110. Like my colleagues, I think his attempt to bring some real sense to what's happening in our education system is worthy of the debate today. Again like my colleagues, whether or not I might agree with the exact specifics, I certainly think that during this important time in the Legislature, which is an opportunity for private member's bills, it's worthy of support and it ought to be moved on further so we can focus discussion, in this province and in this Legislature, very much on what is happening in classrooms. That is the key to the real issues I hear about as I travel around in my riding.

For instance, last evening at Westdale high school I participated, along with our education critic, Bud Wildman, and our leader, Howard Hampton, in a forum at a public event sponsored by SPA, Students for Political Action, which is a student group, and cosponsored by OSSTF. The room was packed, absolutely packed with standing room only. It wasn't just teachers, it wasn't just parents, it wasn't just students; it was anyone and everyone who has a concern about education. A good number of school board trustees were there. Over and over, the message was: What this Tory government is doing to education is hurting the children, the kids, the students in the classroom.

I would argue that nothing upsets people more, particularly the parents — I see one of my colleagues across the way, a Tory member from Hamilton. I caution him to start listening to the very parents who are on the parent councils his government touts as the be-all and end-all, because they're very worried about what's going on in the classrooms, particularly as this government says that things like classroom cleaning and transportation don't affect the classroom and don't count when you decide how much money is going to classrooms.

I can tell you something else, and this happened at another debate I attended at St Thomas More high school a week or two ago as parents, students and teachers again looked at the \$1 billion that's coming out of the classroom — because that is where it's coming from. This government likes to put forward that it's 47%; I believe that's the figure. The reality is that in Hamilton in the public school system it's between 2% and 4%. Every administrator, official, parent and student body will stand behind that figure, yet this minister stands here and says that's not the case.

I suggest they talk to Marlene Gibson, the parent of a student, who is active in a parent council. She's very concerned. She's participating in as big a way as a parent can be expected to. She knows the impact of the \$400 million you took out last year and what that's done to our classrooms. She's very worried about what's going to happen when you take out this next \$1 billion.

That's what this is all about in terms of Bill 104, which does tie in to Bill 110. Your intent is to take away control of those budgets because you didn't like what happened in places like Hamilton, where our trustees said, "You're not going to get rid of junior kindergarten and you're not going to close off a lot of our special needs programs," and put forward a small increase in the

mill rate — not very popular, but bloody courageous. I've commended them before and I continue to commend them for doing that.

This government doesn't like that because it goes against its ideology. They're going to take over control of the education system, not to make it better, this nonsense that you're going to do more with less. What a lot of garbage; we're going to end up doing less with less. When trustees like Ray Mulholland, with over 20 years' experience and a former chair of the board, speak out and say that everything you're doing is hurting classrooms and hurting kids, that ought to be listened to.

I want to thank the member again for bringing this forward. It's important that bills like this hit the floor and we talk about what's really going on in the classrooms out there.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Mr Bartolucci, you have two minutes.

**Mr Bartolucci:** I'd like to thank those members from both opposition parties who spoke in favour of the bill. I'd like to make just one or two comments to the member for Halton Centre and the member for Northumberland.

I simply ask the member for Northumberland to read the study *Class Size: When Less Can Be More*. He will find out how wrong he really is with his assumption that this will not enhance education.

To the member for Halton Centre, you started off by stating, as the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Education, that you agree in principle, agree with the intent of the motion. I believe this reading is what that is all about, and then we debate the specifics when we go to committee. The member for Northumberland also started and ended his comments by stating that he agreed with the intent. I suggest that if you truly believe in the intent of the resolution or the motion, you will support it going to committee, where we can hash out the problems that may exist in the bill.

Clearly this bill is not perfect. Clearly this bill reflects what parents, students, teachers and trustees are thinking. I understand that there may be some refinements necessary, but I want you to know, honestly, that the people of this province, the students of this province, the parents of this province, the board trustees of this province, the teachers of this province, are concerned with class sizes. It must be addressed.

If you agree with the intent, then you agree that at second reading it should be passed on to committee for further discussion. This is what private members' hour is all about. If you agree with intent, you then agree to put it on to a meaningful committee, and I ask you to live up to that agreement and pass it on to the committee.

**The Deputy Speaker:** We are now dealing with ballot item number 61, standing in the name of Mr Bartolucci. If any members are opposed to a vote on this ballot item, will they please rise.

Mr Bartolucci moves second reading of Bill 110. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members; this will be a five-minute bell.

*The division bells rang from 1201 to 1206.*



**The Deputy Speaker:** Order. All those in favour of the motion will please rise and remain standing until your names are called.

#### Ayes

Agostino, Dominic	Cordiano, Joseph	Marchese, Rosario
Arnott, Ted	Crozier, Bruce	McLean, Allan K.
Baird, John R.	Curling, Alvin	McLeod, Lyn
Bartolucci, Rick	Doyle, Ed	McLash, Frank
Bassett, Isabel	Gerretsen, John	O'Toole, John
Bisson, Gilles	Grandmaître, Bernard	Patten, Richard
Boushy, Dave	Hoy, Pat	Pettit, Trevor
Boyd, Marion	Kennedy, Gerard	Pupatello, Sandra
Bradley, James J.	Kwinter, Monte	Ramsay, David
Brown, Michael A.	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Sergio, Mario
Christopherson, David	Lankin, Frances	Shea, Derwyn
Churley, Marilyn	Laughren, Floyd	Silipo, Tony
Colle, Mike	Leadston, Gary L.	Wildman, Bud

**The Deputy Speaker:** All those opposed to the motion will please rise and remain standing until your names are called.

#### Nays

Chudleigh, Ted	Hudak, Tim	Rollins, E.J. Douglas
Danford, Harry	Johnson, Bert	Sheehan, Frank
Fisher, Barbara	Jordan, W. Leo	Skarica, Toni
Ford, Douglas B.	Leach, Al	Smith, Bruce
Galt, Doug	Martiniuk, Gerry	Stewart, R. Gary
Gilchrist, Steve	Maves, Bart	Wettlaufer, Wayne
Grimmett, Bill	Munro, Julia	Wood, Bob
Hastings, John	Preston, Peter	Young, Terence H.

**Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers):** The ayes are 39; the nays are 24.

**The Deputy Speaker:** I declare the motion carried.

Pursuant to standing order 96(k), the bill is referred to the committee of the whole House.

**Mr Bartolucci:** Social development.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Shall this bill be referred to the committee on social development?

All those opposed to this question will please rise and remain standing.

*Interjections.*

**The Deputy Speaker:** The question is, shall the bill be referred to the standing committee on social development?

All those in favour of the motion will please rise and remain standing until the numbers are called.

Take your seats. The majority of the House being in agreement with the request of the member, this bill is referred to the standing committee on social development.

All matters relating to private members' public business having been completed, I do now leave the chair. The House will resume at 1:30 this afternoon.

*The House recessed from 1211 to 1331.*

## MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

### MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

**Mr Mario Sergio (Yorkview):** In his taxpayer-funded glossy brochures distributed to every home, Minister of Municipal Affairs Al Leach informed the people of Metro

Toronto that the megacity proposal will move us forward towards the next century, that it is paramount to our prosperity. The Chinatown East chamber of commerce, which represents over 300 local businesses, recently came out and criticized the Harris government because the small business owners know that the shifting of all essential services on to municipalities will result in higher property taxes in Metro.

One of the dominant concerns expressed by residents about the Harris government's megacity plans is that we will lose our diverse and distinct neighbourhoods. The government justification for destroying our city of neighbourhoods is that business and industries are leaving Toronto. However, small local business owners in our vibrant neighbourhoods clearly see through the municipal affairs minister's rhetoric and rightly understand that the cost of what he is doing will ultimately drive local businesses out of business.

The Harris government is not making our great city better. Not only is this government making our municipal boundaries disappear, what it is in fact doing is destroying the multicultural essence of distinct neighbourhoods. Distinct communities and their local small businesses lend character and flavour to our metropolitan area, neighbourhoods such as Chinatown East.

**Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale):** I was delighted to see the Premier's recipe for one-bowl chocolate cake in yesterday's Star. It looks good. I understand the recipe was originally intended to make six smaller cupcakes but that the Premier unilaterally changed the recipe to make one large mega-cake.

But Premier, there's another recipe of yours that's not so appetizing, and I call it the Mike Harris recipe for mega-disaster: Take six well-functioning cities and forcefully blend at high speed until amalgamated. Ensure no evidence of culture or distinctiveness remains. Take care not to add any convincing rationale. Well-respected and experienced chefs may insist that your recipe is flawed. Just pretend to listen; after all, you know best. Meanwhile, download welfare costs.

Note: This recipe will create uncertainty about mega property tax increases. As a result, some unpleasant referenda results may bubble to the surface on March 3. Before they can impart an unpleasant flavour, quickly and dismissively skim them off and discard. Now add a healthy dollop of Tory arrogance, a large helping of disdain for democracy, sprinkle with phoney tax-cut rhetoric and serve quickly to a wary and demoralized citizenry.

Premier, this recipe leaves a bitter aftertaste in my mouth. However, your chocolate cake sounds delicious. You should give up your day job and stay home baking cakes or, for that matter, hot breakfast cereal.

### RAMADAN

**Mr Bob Wood (London South):** I know that I speak on behalf of all members of this House in extending greetings to the Muslim community of Ontario and in wishing them Ramadan Kareem and Eid Mubarak. These greetings, which in Arabic mean "May you have a month of giving and a blessed feast," speak to the central meaning of Ramadan.



Canada's 500,000 Muslims are, of course, observing a month of fasting during Ramadan, between January 10 and this weekend. Ramadan was the month in which the verses of the Holy Koran were first revealed to the prophet Mohammed. During Ramadan, adult Muslims abstain from food, drink, marital relations and bad habits during their fast.

Our Muslim neighbours will be celebrating the feast of Eid-Ul-Fitr, the end of Ramadan, this weekend. After gathering for prayers, they meet with one another, giving presents and sharing alms with the needy so that all members of the community may be able to celebrate together.

Understanding why our Muslim friends are not sharing coffee breaks or lunch with us this month is a first step towards appreciating their devotion to God and the practice of their faith. In fulfilling the teachings of their faith, they demonstrate to us a commitment to righteousness and a compassion for the needy, qualities to which we can all aspire.

#### GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING

**Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor-Sandwich):** A constituent of Windsor-Sandwich followed the Premier's advice and called the famous 1-800 line viewed on the \$2.3-million television ads in my riding. He called because he wanted the government's plan for health care. He was assured over the phone that the government had a plan and that a package explaining the government's vision would be sent to him. Let me tell you what he received. He received a recruitment package from the Progressive Conservative Party. It included a membership form to join the Progressive Conservative Party.

That is shocking. Do you really think the people of Windsor-Sandwich would go out of their way to join a party that is decimating health care across Ontario, particularly in my riding? Not only that: He wanted a vision on health care as a gentleman laid off in the health care sector. He also lives across the street from the emergency room being closed down because of the Progressive Conservative government.

This is simply not acceptable, that \$2.3 million in ads could be wasted on television companies instead of spent on areas like emergency care on the west side of Windsor. It is not acceptable, not to my constituent. He expects to see a real plan for health care.

#### MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

**Mr Tony Silipo (Dovercourt):** As you know, the hearings on Bill 103, the megacity venture of this government, are well under way now and we are continuing to hear from citizens of all stripes how abhorrent they find this proposal and this venture from this government.

As one presenter this morning said, "What scares me is the possibility that this mega-scheme may destroy this marvellous city, with its sidewalk cafés and street musicians, its hot dog vendors and fruit and vegetable stands, its mixed use of buildings, its mixtures of people of all ages and economic status and ethnic backgrounds, a city rich in diversity, a city to live in, a city to walk in, a city to love" — a city, I might add, that is working; yes, a

city that needs to change, but speaker after speaker is telling us that change needs to come about as a result of real discussion involving politicians at both levels but, most important, involving the citizens who live in this great metropolis.

As the mayor of the city of Toronto this morning said so clearly, "What's the rush?" What's the rush this government has in imposing this megacity scheme when what should be happening is some thoughtful and serious discussion about the alternatives, about what can be done to ensure that Toronto is here into the foreseeable future in a way that allows people to continue to have the best of the local democratic process they have now and will continue to grow and thrive into the next century. That's the direction this government should be taking. Bill 103 is completely the opposite of that.

#### ONTARIO ECONOMY

**Ms Isabel Bassett (St Andrew-St Patrick):** This morning, Finance Minister Ernie Eves released information to the standing committee on finance and economic affairs on the performance of the economy for the third quarter of 1996. The third-quarter Ontario Finances and the Ontario Economic Accounts reports contain good news for the people of Ontario. The figures show that Ontario's economy is growing and that this government is on track in meeting its deficit reduction target. The province's gross domestic product rose at 3.8% annual rate in the third quarter, faster than the national rate of 3.3%.

Ontario is leading the way in private sector job creation. Since this government took office, more than half the private sector jobs created in Canada have been created right here in Ontario. Revenue increased by more than \$1 billion, primarily as a result of strong growth in personal and corporate income tax and retail sales tax revenues.

Business investment has been rising as Ontario firms adapt to competing in world markets. In the latest conference board survey on national business confidence, almost 60% of respondents identified Ontario as the province where they plan to invest the most.

Record low interest rates, competitive prices and rising consumer confidence led to a rebound in the housing market. For 1996 —

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Thank you.

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#### CLASS SIZE

**Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury):** This morning during private members' hour the remarkable happened, the unusual happened: Everyone in the House was listening to what everybody else had to say. We're only a little disappointed that the Minister of Education wasn't in the House to hear the very excellent arguments that were being made by all three parties with regard to Bill 110.

The House decided that this bill would pass second reading, that this House supported it in principle. The parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Education and the member for Northumberland spoke against the resolution, but agreed the intent of the resolution is the



way this government should go. So although they voted against it, they agreed with it in principle; they agreed with the intent. You know what? It's going to the committee for social development.

I can't wait for this committee to travel across the province to hear from parents, from teachers, from school board trustees, from all those stakeholders in education, telling this government, telling us in opposition, telling everyone in the province that class sizes are too big, that we have to limit the number of students who enter individual classes in Ontario, that to maximize the potential for development of children and of students, we must ensure there are reasonable class sizes.

### MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

**Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine):** Mr Speaker, as you know, over the last few weeks community after community, neighbourhood after neighbourhood have been holding meetings, looking at the government's proposed megacity legislation. There is tremendous grassroots community opposition to this.

Just this week alone, on Monday night, I attended a meeting at the Walter Stewart library; there were 65 people there. Tuesday night at the Acropol Banquet Hall on Gerrard Street there were over 200 people. Last night at Valley Park public school in East York there were 250 to 300 people at that meeting. I have to say that each of these meetings has been very open, very accessible and people have been able to ask questions or put forward their own comments.

I want to contrast that with another meeting that took place, hosted by the member for York Mills, David Turnbull. He had the member for Scarborough East, Steven Gilchrist, there. People who were opposed to the megacity weren't allowed to bring in their literature. After they lectured to the crowd, a small crowd that was there of some 60 people, they were told it was time for questions.

People had to write out their questions and then David Turnbull hand-selected the questions, read them out and Steven Gilchrist answered those questions. No one could raise their voice themselves; not one citizen could speak out, and when they tried — in fact a card-carrying member of the Conservative Party tried — they were shut down and they ended up leaving the meeting. This is the way this government continues to refuse to listen to the citizens of Metropolitan Toronto.

### CHINESE NEW YEAR

**Mr Derwyn Shea (High Park-Swansea):** Tonight marks the beginning of Chinese New Year, a festival which will be continuously celebrated by the Chinese-Canadian community for the next two weeks in honour of the Year of the Ox.

According to tradition, the festival of Chung Chieh dates to a time when a wild beast threatened to kill many villagers in China towards the end of the winter. Seeing that the beast feared bright lights, noise and the colour red, the people began protecting themselves on the last day of the lunar year by lighting up their houses, painting objects red, banging drums and gongs and exploding crackers.

Other new year practices include symbolic foods, such as bean sprouts that promise prosperity and oysters that promise good business. After midnight, especially in Hong Kong, people will go out to buy flowers for good luck, dragon and lion dances will be performed as people visit temples, and objects like scissors and brooms are left alone on New Year's Day since they can cut good luck and sweep out good fortune.

On behalf of the government of Ontario I have the privilege of wishing all members of the Chinese Canadian community a very happy and prosperous new year. I congratulate all of them and thank them on behalf of all Ontarians for their many contributions to Canada and for the opportunity to experience their colourful and richly meaningful culture. Happy New Year. Gong Hay Fat Choy.

**Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor-Sandwich):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: We were not informed that there would be this number of cabinet ministers absent today. We request that perhaps they would come out or we would have unanimous consent to delay question period.

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** I have a request to seek unanimous consent to delay question period. Agreed? Not agreed.

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker:** It's okay, it didn't carry. Member for Algoma?

**Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma):** I was under the impression, Speaker, that there would be unanimous consent to pay tribute to the former member for Windsor-Riverside, but I'm not certain now whether the Liberal caucus —

**The Speaker:** The member for Algoma is seeking unanimous consent for the member for Windsor-Riverside. Agreed? Agreed.

### DAVID COOKE

**Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance):** It's a pleasure for me to rise today and pay tribute to one of the longest-serving members in the Ontario Legislature, at least during my tenure here, since 1981. Dave Cooke, of course, is a relatively young individual by almost any measure in today's political world, some 44 years of age, but he's served almost half his life as a member of the Ontario Legislature.

He started out wanting to be an elected representative, to represent the people in his area of the province at Queen's Park. He achieved his goal and has been, I think, ultimately successful. When you look through some of David's press clippings over the last not just few weeks but few years, he's certainly done quite a job for the city of Windsor and the southwestern area of the province, but more importantly for the entire province of Ontario as a whole. He served in many capacities here at Queen's Park both before and after my tenure here. He served as Minister of Education and Training under the New Democratic government.

When I was in Windsor a couple of weeks ago I talked to many people there, including the incumbent mayor, the former mayor and many other people in the community, and I can tell you that regardless of their political stripe, people in the city of Windsor regard him as somebody



who has represented them extremely well. He has brought over \$600 million worth of bricks and mortar, as the Windsor Star said, to the city of Windsor. He has done exactly what I think provincial representatives, regardless of their area of the province or political party, are elected to do, and that is to better the lives of their constituents, and indeed better the lives of Ontario residents as a whole.

As David recently said in an interview in the Windsor Star, "I don't want to set a world record, and I'm not sure the people of Windsor-Riverside would necessarily let me set a world record, for the longest-serving, democratically elected politician."

He has gone on to assume other responsibilities, which of course is no secret to anybody in this place. I am sure he will bring the same degree of enthusiasm, integrity and determination that he's brought to his days here at Queen's Park for some 20 years.

It's difficult perhaps for members of his own party to understand why Mr Cooke would accept such an appointment. It may be difficult for some members of my own caucus to understand why a government would want a member of another political party to do such an important task. I can tell you that the only criterion for the job, and the only qualification, I believe, that Mr Cooke brings to the job, is that he is a person of utmost integrity. I think he will approach his new responsibilities with the sophistication, integrity, understanding and knowledge that he's brought to his many days in 20 years as a representative at Queen's Park.

I think he will do an honest and a fair job, and that's all that is asked of him. Indeed, that's what he did every day in this place for over 20 years.

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I had many battles with David, as the House leader, I had many battles with him in the Board of Internal Economy, but I can tell you that we developed a feeling of mutual respect and trust that I think this place has to have if it's going to operate. It's fine for one side to have 82 seats and another party to have fewer seats, but this place doesn't work unless there is that feeling of mutual trust among House leaders, among members and among members of political parties.

I think David Cooke has brought that sort of approach and attitude to this place for well over 20 years and I am confident that he will bring it to his representation of the people of Ontario in the new duties he's been asked to perform and has graciously accepted.

**Mrs Sandra Papatello (Windsor-Sandwich):** Our party is most appreciative of the opportunity to speak about Dave Cooke, the member for Windsor-Riverside.

As a local resident of the city of Windsor and Essex county, I personally was able to watch the long hours that Dave Cooke has always put into the work of the constituency for the constituents of Windsor-Riverside. We knew that David began his work for the community well before his first election, as a social worker, in his work through children's aid, and he always held the cause of children dear.

He took that work with him to Queen's Park 20 years ago. Having now arrived at Queen's Park as his col-

league, I can tell you that the people in Windsor and Essex county probably never got to see and appreciate the work Dave Cooke has done over the many years here at Queen's Park. Unless you know the workings and inner wranglings of the running of affairs at Queen's Park, you really don't appreciate how valuable he was to the NDP caucus and what a pivotal player he has always been, whether it was through his work as House leader or through his work as a minister during the term of an NDP government.

He was always well respected, and now his appointment to work for the Ministry of Education is testimony to how well respected he's been in the education field. It was put quite well by a gentleman named Charles Pascal, a former Deputy Minister of Education, who said quite clearly that of any of the people who worked in the area of education, as a politician he could honestly bring forward a very non-partisan view to that job. We believe his perspective on education truly was his personal belief, that he made that part of who he was. In many articles and interviews that Dave Cooke did during his time as a government member he always said that he felt he had finally arrived when he could work as Minister of Education, doing the things he honestly believed in.

In all the years I have been involved in various community things in Windsor, Dave Cooke and I often crossed paths. I'll tell you that Dave spent just as many hours at home, traipsing around the Italian clubs, the Serbian clubs, the CAW hall, walking in parades, and it was always Dave Cooke who got the fancy open-air Jeep to drive around in the parade while we got stuck with the rather regular models. But Dave Cooke always managed to look the renegade part in the open-air Jeep, so we were always impressed that he could finagle that one from the various people organizing the parade.

It was with great sadness that the majority of people of Essex county saw that he would be ending his years here at Queen's Park, but most of the people of Essex county know that he will continue to serve our community just as he has done for many years as a member of provincial Parliament.

We wish him good luck. We will tell him too, as a brief partisan note, that we were always a little dismayed that even Liberals would vote for Dave Cooke, not because of his party but because he was simply Dave Cooke. So our hats are off to Dave Cooke.

**Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma):** It's a pleasure for me to speak on behalf of my leader and caucus in paying tribute to a former colleague who has served this party, served this House and served the people of Ontario with distinction over 20 years.

Many of us in this House, particularly newer members, I guess, may not appreciate the effort and the kind of self-sacrifice it takes to serve in this place for over 20 years. There aren't many of us who achieve that length of service, and I think it's a tribute to the relationship Dave Cooke had with the people of Windsor and particularly the people of Windsor-Riverside.

As the member from the Liberal Party pointed out, Dave Cooke had support in Windsor that went far beyond the support simply of New Democrats but was very



widespread. He gained the respect of people from all three parties in that community and I think across Ontario for the work that he did.

Dave started serving people right from the time he finished his formal education. He became a social worker and worked for the children's aid society. He had a long-enduring interest in children throughout his career which he still maintains. He served on the board of education in Windsor prior to being elected to this place in 1977 to represent Windsor-Riverside and he maintained his interest in education matters throughout his career and maintains that today.

Dave was particularly interested, as I said, in children but also in the elderly and in the health care system, social services generally. In opposition he brought before this House issues around the mismanagement of nursing homes to the point that the government had to respond and to ensure that the senior citizens and disabled who were being cared for in nursing homes were treated with dignity and with proper care.

When we were elected to government, Dave was really an important cog in our government, and I think that former Premier Bob Rae would agree with me in saying that Dave Cooke was, if not his second-in-command, certainly the third-in-command in our government. Dave served in many portfolios: the Ministry of Education and Training, municipal affairs, management board, and also served as House leader. He was a member of the inner cabinet and the policy and priorities committee and was always very knowledgeable and put forward his positions clearly and forcefully.

The Minister of Finance said that he had many battles — public battles and private as well, I suppose — with Dave Cooke. I might say I also had some battles with Dave Cooke and usually in caucus or in cabinet I was on the losing end because of the conviction with which Dave put forward his position, the knowledge he had, the research he had done and the ability with which he put forward his views.

Dave is also a friend and it has been a privilege for me personally to have known Dave for these many years and to have been able to serve along with him. He has a tremendous sense of humour. As I said, we may have had disagreements from time to time but they were never long-lasting and we were pleased to be able to work together, along with our other colleagues, for the advancement of the people of Ontario generally.

Dave worked very hard for the people in his constituency and for the people of Windsor and southwestern Ontario generally. He worked hard for the people of Ontario. He was focused, he knew what he believed and why. He was dedicated, determined and committed. He is only now in his 40s. He isn't retiring from public life, he's continuing to serve the people of Ontario.

All of us have benefited from knowing Dave and being able to work with him over the years. The people of Ontario have benefited from the dedicated public service of Dave Cooke and they will continue to do so.

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** I will ensure those comments are passed on to Mr Cooke. It's now time for oral questions.

1400

## ARREST OF MEMBER

**Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I want to bring a point of privilege before the House. Two primary authorities on British parliamentary procedure both contain provisions for informing the assembly of the arrest of a member of the assembly. The sixth edition of Beauchesne's Parliamentary Rules and Forms contains the following passage on page 24:

"From British practice it would seem that if a member is arrested the House should be informed, through the Speaker, by the judge or the magistrate concerned. There is no example of this...happening in the Parliament of Canada, although in 1946 the Prime Minister made an extensive statement explaining the circumstances...of Fred Rose," who ultimately was convicted on espionage charges.

The 21st edition of Erskine May's Parliamentary Practice contains the following reference, found on page 96:

"The committal of a lord or member for high treason or any criminal offence is brought before the House by a letter addressed to the Lord Chancellor or the Speaker by the committing judge or magistrate."

We learned last night that a member of this assembly will be arrested. On at least one television broadcast, the Metropolitan police were said to have confirmed that a summons of arrest will be issued to the member for Welland-Thorold tomorrow.

Mr Speaker, have you taken any steps or will you take any steps to ensure that this assembly is adequately informed of the charges which will be laid against the member for Welland-Thorold, in keeping with parliamentary convention?

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** The difficulty is, to the member for Algoma — I will investigate, but with respect, I have no power to investigate the matter. I must check to see if communication has been had, but I can tell you, I don't think so.

Further, it would seem imprudent of me to comment at this time, considering what you've quoted chapter and verse. If you would allow me the opportunity to review it, I'll be happy to do so. But I want to leave that by saying I don't have any powers of investigation. I'm allowed to review it and, as I understand it at this point, the member has not been arrested so again it makes it presumptuous to some degree on my part, but I will seize the issue and report back.

## ATTORNEY GENERAL'S COMMENTS

**Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River):** Mr Speaker, on a point of privilege: Standing order 21 is quite clear. It says:

"Privileges are the rights enjoyed by the House collectively and by the members of the House individually conferred by the Legislative Assembly Act and other statutes, or by practice, precedent, usage and custom," and I want to emphasize, by practice, by precedent, by usage, by custom and also by statutes. "Whenever a matter of privilege arises, it shall be taken into consideration immediately."



Speaker, we all know it is inappropriate for any member of this Legislature to comment on matters that are before the courts and under police investigation, and our own rules say that on page 16. It essentially says, "a member shall be called to order by the Speaker if he or she" — and I refer to part (g) — "Refers to any matter that is the subject of a proceeding that is pending in a court or before a judge for judicial determination, or that is before any quasi-judicial body constituted by the House or by or under the authority of an act of the Legislature."

These are part of our own rules, and I want to refer to those rules. I want to refer to part (h), "Makes allegations against another member," and (i), "Imputes false or unavowed motives to another member."

Our own rules cover these issues, and there is a fair amount of precedent around these issues. The conclusion that I would draw from this, though, is that it is inappropriate for any member of this Legislature to comment on matters that are before the courts or under police investigation. It simply is improper.

I want to refer you as well to some very important literature that has been written about the constitutional and legal role of the Attorney General, and I'll make that available to you because I think it's important for you to have a look at it and the connection with our own rules. I believe it's paramount that the Attorney General, the chief law officer of the province, must not comment on a matter which is the subject of a police investigation or before the courts.

I would refer you to page 153 of Beauchesne's Parliamentary Rules and Forms, sixth edition, which states the following, part 505:

"Members are expected to refrain from discussing matters that are before the courts or tribunals which are courts of record. The purpose of this sub judice convention is to protect the parties in a case awaiting or undergoing trial and persons who stand to be affected by the outcome of a judicial inquiry. It is a voluntary restraint imposed by the House upon itself in the interest of justice and fair play."

The goal here, the reason legislatures impose this restraint upon themselves, is in the interest of justice and fair play.

Part 509 of Beauchesne says, and this is the important part for you, Speaker:

"[T]he responsibility of the Speaker during the question period should be minimal as regards the sub judice convention, and the responsibility should principally rest upon the member who asks the question and the minister to whom it is addressed. However, the Speaker should remain the final arbiter in the matter but should exercise discretion only in exceptional cases."

These are the two quotations from Beauchesne. I want to refer now to the facts that occurred in this House.

On November 7, 1996, the Attorney General rose in his place to announce that the police were called in to investigate an incident on the premises of his ministry. Hansard shows he quite clearly accused the member for Welland-Thorold and the member for Sudbury East of having participated in criminal activities.

The natural limit that precedent has placed on the historic practice of matters which are before the criminal

justice system has been a practical one. It's been a practical one. No one could reasonably expect the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly to know about all police investigations, all matters currently before the courts of Ontario. We don't expect you, practically, to know all those details.

But this situation is quite different. In this situation the Attorney General rose in this House and announced the beginnings of the investigation and announced who the investigation was about. Every member of this House, including you, knew that an investigation was under way. I will repeat Beauchesne's warning that although it is rarely appropriate for the Speaker to be asked whether a matter is sub judice, the Speaker should remain the "final arbiter."

In a case like this, where you as Speaker could reasonably be expected to know about the commencement of a police investigation which had just been announced by the Attorney General, I believe it is appropriate for members of this assembly to request that you now play that role, in Beauchesne's words, that you be the "final arbiter" in this matter.

I want to refer to a few more authorities because I think they are relevant to what is happening here. In fact, I think they are quite relevant to what is happening here.

I'm referring to Professor Alan Young, who is a professor of constitutional law at York University. Professor Young has given a legal opinion on this matter and it relates directly to what we're talking about here today. I will present you with a copy of this, Speaker, because I believe it bears heavily on what Beauchesne is referring to and about our rules of practice and about your role here of being the final arbiter.

1410

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Order, members. If you're going to have a meeting, can you please go to the lobby outside to have your meeting? It's very difficult to hear. Thank you.

**Mr Hampton:** In his legal opinion, Professor Alan Young makes the following point, referring to the comments made by the Attorney General, comments made by the Attorney General in this House. He says:

"His actions and statements compromised the independence of the office of the AG; his actions and statements compromised the independence of the police; his actions and statements have the potential of impairing the integrity of the trial process...."

I want to go back to Beauchesne. Beauchesne, in his reference to the British Parliament, our own Parliament — and our own rules; it's important; we recognize these matters in our own rules — makes this point:

"Members are expected to refrain from discussing matters that are before the courts or tribunals which are courts of record. The purpose of this sub judice convention is to protect the parties in a case awaiting or undergoing trial and persons who stand to be affected by the outcome of a judicial inquiry."

He finally makes the point that "It is a voluntary restraint imposed by the House upon itself in the interest of justice and fair play."

My point is this, and I think this is a point of privilege that affects all of us: No one in this House would want



this House to be tarnished by activities or comments which would tend to interfere with the proper functioning of our justice system, which would tend to interfere with justice itself, which would tend to interfere with fair play. After all, we pride ourselves on being a nation ruled by law, obedient to the rule of law, not to whim, not to executive privilege, not to whomever may hold power at a particular point in time.

I submit to you that one of the fundamental tenets of our Legislature — not only that: one of the fundamental tenets of our democracy — has been breached. It's referred to in our rules. Beauchesne comments upon it. Beauchesne says that a fundamental rule of our Legislature, of all democratic legislatures under the British parliamentary system, is that we impose restraint upon ourselves. We do not make comments in here which might tend to prejudice the justice process, which might tend to prejudice fair play in the trial system or in the workings of the justice system.

I submit to you, Speaker, that what happened in this Legislature and as those events have now unfolded, what happened in this Legislature on November 7, 1996, was not only a breach of our rules that we should not comment upon something before a judge or something that was going to go before a judge, but we should not impute false or unavowed motives to another member, we should not make allegations against another member. All of these converge.

I would submit to you that this is such a serious breach of our own rules and such a serious breach of one of our fundamental principles — that we respect justice, we respect the justice system, we do not interfere with the justice system, we do not interfere with the outcomes of the justice system, we do not prejudice the activities of the police or the courts or the prosecution — it is such a fundamental rule, and I believe what has happened is that the line has been crossed.

As Beauchesne says, Speaker, I believe it is now up to you, as the final arbiter in these matters, to consider this issue and to consider Beauchesne's comments, our own rules, to consider if one of our fundamental rules not to interfere with the justice system, not to interfere with outcomes of the justice system, has not been breached and all the privileges of the members of this House have not been breached, and I would argue that it borders on bringing this House into contempt.

I ask you to review these authorities and to look at this from the perspective of being the final arbiter.

**Hon David Johnson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Minister of Health, Government House Leader):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: These are matters that were brought to the attention of this House last November, I believe it was, at that point brought forward by the third party in particular, I suspect, and by the opposition at great length, pertaining to comments that may or may not have been made by the Attorney General. You considered those matters very thoroughly at that time and you made a ruling which is noted in Hansard of November 18, where you indicated that you had "reviewed the parliamentary authorities and find that the matters raised by the members on November 7 do not qualify as a case of privilege." So you have

made a ruling on this matter, Mr Speaker, and I would submit that this matter has been dealt with.

In terms of interference, the police obviously are independent. They choose which cases to investigate and not investigate; they choose in which cases to make charges and not make charges. I am not aware, government is not aware of particular charges in any particular instances the third party may be raising. That's a matter for the police. That is completely independent. This matter has been fully dealt with, and I submit that you've made your ruling and that we should get on with the business of the House.

**Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine):** Further on this point of privilege: I believe that in the legal opinion that has been released there is reason to raise this matter again with the Speaker and particularly to draw the Speaker's attention within this opinion to Supreme Court rulings and to the legal opinion which says that the court of the Legislature, the Legislative Assembly, is the arena in which this matter must be dealt with.

There are only three references that I want to make specifically to the opinion and one to a court ruling which I hope would be of assistance to you, so I will be brief.

First of all at page 14 of the opinion from Alan Young, I quote: "...it is apparent that the AG acted in a manner inconsistent with constitutional convention in that he intervened in a case which should not require his involvement, and that he announced the pending criminal investigation into the activities of political opponents in a forum and in a manner which leads to an appearance of partisan political interference."

I would say to you, Mr Speaker, with respect to the point just raised by the government House leader, the points of order that were raised at the time in present were not with respect to the statement the minister had made in the House but rather to comments in interjections and later in debate, so I believe there is a new area being raised.

Second, I would like to quote again from Professor Young: "In this case, the Attorney General appears to have bypassed the conventional and usual method of initiating a police investigation and as a result of his actions, he has acted in a manner inconsistent with the duties of the chief law officer of the province."

Third, I would like to quote from page 31: "I have concluded that the actions and statements of the AG on November 7, 1996, were violative of the historical and constitutional traditions of the AG. Although some people may conclude that the AG's initial comments were simply an inadvertent and careless response to heated interjections by members of the assembly, it must not be forgotten that he repeated these comments a number of times after having had time to reflect upon his comments and regain his composure."

The two references that I want to make, one I alluded to was the Supreme Court of Canada, a ruling in 1971, in which the Supreme Court indicated that "...obviously, the manner in which the AG of the day exercises his statutory discretion may be questioned or censured by the legislative body to which he is answerable"; and second, again referring to the opinion of Professor Alan Young,



and I quote from that, "As to possible remedies for this violation of constitutional convention, it is clear that the primary remedy would lie in accountability to the Legislative Assembly."

1420

Mr Speaker, we seek your guidance in how we may pursue access to that remedy. We believe there has been a breach of privilege of all members of this House. We believe that the cited opinions are from the most renowned legal minds on this subject and that this must be taken into account with respect to the workings of this Legislative Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Quickly, a point of privilege, leader of the third party?

**Mr Hampton:** Just to be clear, in response to the government House leader, I have looked at your comments from November and I believe that the only thing you ruled on in November was a point we raised as to whether Hansard had been altered. You ruled at that time on that issue. You did not rule on this issue: What happens when a member of the Legislature breaches not only one of our own fundamental rules but breaches a code of conduct and internal restraint which all members follow? I don't believe you've ruled on that.

Even more so, Speaker, added to that, the facts are now changed by the extension of events. The police were on television last night. The police indicated that a member of the Legislature, and they identified that member of the Legislature as the member for Welland-Thorold, will be charged.

The comments that were made by the Attorney General now assume a totally new importance. The comments made by the Attorney General in terms of singling out the member for Welland-Thorold and making an accusation of a break-in, accusations of criminal activity and calling for a police investigation in this Legislature in my view breach all of our tenets, our rules about respecting the justice system, respecting fair play in the justice system and non-interference in the justice system. I make the point again, Speaker: I believe you must now be the final arbiter in this very serious matter.

**The Speaker:** Point of privilege, Minister of Environment.

**Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Environment and Energy):** I think it's important to distinguish here that when an Attorney General in this place is answering in the House or talking about certain matters, sometimes they talk about different matters that are ongoing in this province, and whether or not they are interfering with the criminal justice system or the civil law system is a matter of discretion.

I want to point out to you, Mr Speaker, that on November 26, 1992, the former Attorney General of this province, the now leader of the third party, said to this Legislature, in answer to a question from Mr Conway, the member for Renfrew North, with regard to Mr John Piper — Mr Hampton, on page 3537: "I'm advised that officials in the criminal law division were in touch with officials of the Ontario Provincial Police on Friday to request that an investigation into the events of Thursday and Friday take place."

At that time there was no call nor sensitivity with regard to the former Attorney General in revealing that there was an investigation taking place with regard to John Piper. Mr Speaker, I think by that admission —

**Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma):** He didn't make it an accusation of criminal activity.

**Hon Mr Sterling:** Mr Speaker, he was reporting the events of what was going on with regard to that particular investigation. There have been some allegations as to what the Attorney General did and didn't say. We do not accept the allegations put forward by the leader of the third party with regard to this matter, nor do we think the Attorney General stepped over a line.

**The Speaker:** I appreciate the submissions from all members. As far as the House leader for the government is concerned, I don't recollect completely what exactly I was ruling on at that time in November. I do remember very vividly the events, but I don't quite recall exactly the ruling that was asked to be made.

It seems incumbent on me to take these issues, review them and report back to this House at a later date. I don't think there's anything else I can do considering the circumstances and events. I will also take what the Minister of Environment has provided in the way of information and review it, and I will report back.

**Mr Wildman:** On a point of privilege, Mr Speaker, on another matter: I will be submitting to you some material that was found in the recycling bin outside the government print room yesterday. What I will be submitting to you is a leaflet entitled One Toronto: Changing for the Future, which discusses the proposed amalgamation of governments in Metropolitan Toronto.

Under the heading "Seven Benefits For You: Why a Unified Toronto is Good News for Metro Taxpayers," it lists seven changes which will take place. It doesn't say "perhaps will take place" or "maybe will take place," but "will take place."

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker:** Order, member for Dufferin-Peel.

**Mr Hampton:** On a point of privilege, Mr Speaker: I believe the minister responsible for women's issues just alleged "another case of theft." I believe the minister should, in deference —

**The Speaker:** Leader of the third party, he did say he found it in a recycling bin. I don't think the comment is directed in any sense the way it's taken.

**Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre):** Are you kidding?

**The Speaker:** No, I'm not kidding, with all due respect. I'm not suggesting for a minute — if the leader of the third party would like, I will address the question to the minister. Minister, you have the option to withdraw the comment.

**Hon Dianne Cunningham (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, minister responsible for women's issues):** Well, Mr Speaker —

**The Speaker:** Minister, this is not a conversation. You withdraw or you don't.

**Hon Mrs Cunningham:** I will withdraw the comment.

**The Speaker:** Thank you. Member for Algoma.

**Mr Wildman:** As I was saying, the leaflet has "Seven Benefits for You: Why a Unified Toronto is Good News



for Metro Taxpayers," and then lists a number of things that will happen. It's dated February 1997 —

**The Speaker:** Member for Algoma, can I ask quickly: I understand you're on a point of privilege, but was this document distributed? Was it received anywhere? If it was simply found in a recycling bin, it's very difficult to suggest that this is in fact a document that's been distributed at large. So I would ask directly to the member for Algoma, if it has not been distributed, then it's very difficult for me to hear points of privilege.

**Mr Wildman:** Mr Speaker, I appreciate your assistance. I would want to make clear my point and the point I'm raising. Also on this leaflet it states, on the other page, "Comments and questions: Contact Ontario PC Party, 120 Adelaide Street West, Suite 2020, Toronto," and the telephone, e-mail and fax numbers.

What I am suggesting you should investigate is whether or not this material is being printed on behalf of the Progressive Conservative Party in the government print room.

1430

I also want to submit to you another piece, which is a mail-back piece that was with this, with pictures of the Premier on it. It says, "Ontario PCs." It has the return address: The Ontario PC Party, 120 Adelaide Street West, Suite 2020, Toronto. It gives a message from the Premier, Mike Harris: "We believe in Ontario's future." It talks about welfare changes, government-spending changes, changes in taxes and so on. It also has a mail-back —

**The Speaker:** The member for Algoma, I appreciate your point of privilege and I understand where you're coming from. I don't think anyone in this place wants the Speaker to get involved in determining where something originates from, and how I'm supposed to determine —

*Interjection.*

**The Speaker:** I appreciate the point of privilege you're making. It was in a recycling bin outside the print shop. Beyond that, I say to the member for Algoma, I don't think the members of this House want the Speaker to get involved in investigating this process, because this brochure was found in a recycling bin. With all due respect, it's not something I think the Speaker is going to have any success in reviewing and, secondly, I don't think has the wherewithal to in fact do just that.

If this brochure were sent out or you could bring in some evidence that it was printed at a certain spot or paid for by a specific account that it shouldn't have been, I would be happy to review it. But with all due respect, finding it in a recycling bin outside a print shop isn't a smoking gun, in my opinion.

**Mr Wildman:** With respect, Speaker —

**The Speaker:** With respect to the member for Algoma and with respect to the member for Beaches-Woodbine, that's my ruling on this issue. If you want to continue to —

**Ms Lankin:** There's more information I would like to add.

**The Speaker:** The more information I will hear briefly, then.

**Ms Lankin:** I will add this briefly. I understand the problem you find yourself in in not being able to ascertain full evidence that it was printed in that room. I

would suggest to you that there is additional information you should review. There is a video available which indicates how much material was in that recycling bin. There were multiple copies, obviously a bad print run from the print room, which had been discarded outside the door in there. The problem is that there is Progressive Conservative Party political material being printed using taxpayers' dollars in the government caucus print room, which violates all the rules, and we need you to look into that.

**The Speaker:** Member for Beaches-Woodbine, I appreciate what you've said. You've drawn your conclusions. I don't necessarily think those are conclusions that all would draw. All I can tell you is that I don't have the capacity to investigate those. From what I've seen and been presented with today, it doesn't seem to me that I'm going to spend a fruitful amount of time investigating those kinds of things.

The other issues I've heard today I will take back and report back to the House. I consider them to be very important matters.

#### GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Member for St Catharines, is this a point of privilege?

**Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines):** Yes, it is, Mr Speaker, a very important one. You made a ruling in this House, and it flows from your ruling. Your ruling was on certain advertising that took place. You commented upon television ads which are taking place. I would just like to inform you that yet another series of television ads is taking place, now with the Premier of this province portrayed reading a teleprompter in a classroom in what I believe is clearly partisan, self-serving government propaganda.

Having reviewed the other television ads and advertising, I'm wondering if you would view that particular advertising to see if it's in violation of the spirit of the landmark ruling you made the other day.

**The Speaker:** I will.

**Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma):** Mr Speaker, I want to draw your attention to the government notice of motion number 15 that's on the order paper. I want to raise two questions with you with regard to this motion. This motion is brought forward and on the order paper, and it is quite unusual in that it authorizes a committee to travel to certain locations, which is quite unprecedented in my view and in my understanding of reading similar types of motions that have been presented by governments in the past in this House. Also, it sets out a very limited time frame to deal with a large number of people who have indicated interest in presenting. We understand that over 600 requests have been made, without advertising, for presentations to a committee on Bill 104 and yet the motion only sets forward the equivalent of one week in Toronto and one week of travel across the province to four locations.

I ask you to rule whether it is appropriate to allocate or determine ahead of time what places a committee might travel to and whether this is sufficient. Usually, the committee would do this. Normally, with a committee



under a time allocation motion, the subcommittee would meet together to determine on the basis of what time they've been given where they would travel to, and that would be decided by the majority on the committee.

**The Speaker:** To the member for Algoma, it's a motion that has not been moved and it's not been called. As I've said in the past, there are proper times to move points of order. When the motion is called and moved is the proper time to move that point of order.

It's time for oral questions, unless the member for Fort William has a point of privilege.

**Mrs Lyn McLeod (Fort William):** Mr Speaker, it is a point of order. It's not my intention to delay but I share the concern of the member for Algoma about the very nature of the motion of which notice has been given. It is, as you know, directly related to the closure debate, as well as to the limitations on public hearings.

It's my understanding that is something which you, as Speaker, would be able to determine as to whether that motion being introduced is appropriate or not appropriate. I'm not sure at what point the government intends to bring it forward. I'm not sure if that is within the hour or subsequent to that, but I would hope that in determining whether or not the closure on this debate is appropriate, you would take some time to hear the expressions of concern about just how much is involved in this particular bill, as well as the numbers of people who have already indicated their desire to make their views known.

**The Speaker:** I can only rule on orders, and when a motion is moved by the government I can only rule whether it's in order or not in order. What you're asking me seems beyond my scope, but I will say that when the motion is moved and I hear the points of order I will hear them and rule accordingly.

**Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor-Sandwich):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I know you heard my member's statement earlier, but perhaps I could get some kind of ruling from you as to the appropriateness as it relates to a constituent of mine who responded to the \$2.3-million television ads and what they received instead was a Progressive Conservative membership form.

The difficulty is that when they responded to the 1-800 number, what they requested from those answering the phones was specifically health care vision, and what they got instead was a Progressive Conservative membership form. I believe that given the ads, \$2.3 million of taxpayers' money being spent to talk about the vision of the Ontario government, it is highly inappropriate that it should have become a blatantly partisan push for membership. The offside that it also happens to be a health care worker who was laid off, who lives across from the emergency centre this government is closing, only makes it, as far as I can see, more salt in the wound.

Clearly, I need some help on this, Mr Speaker.

**Hon David Johnson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Minister of Health, Government House Leader):** I don't know what the member is talking about. There is no health care ad out submitting and asking people to write in for any particular copy. The facts are somewhat garbled here, Mr Speaker. I can only say to you that the government is interested in communicating with the people of Ontario, but there is no ad on

the television, no health care ad, advocating that people call in for any particular information.

**The Speaker:** To the member for Windsor-Sandwich, it sounds to me like a very good question and it's something you should ask the government about, and I would give you all the encouragement in the world to ask it.

## ORAL QUESTIONS

### SCHOOL BUS SAFETY

**Mr Pat Hoy (Essex-Kent):** My question is to the Minister of Transportation. This morning, over 800,000 children boarded school buses, trusting that they will return home safely, but tragically 11 children have been killed in the past five years.

I have a private member's bill that will help prosecute reckless drivers. That bill received the unanimous support of this House. My bill has the support of the Ontario School Bus Association, the Police Association of Ontario, school boards, the Federated Women's Institute, the Canada Safety Council, just to name a few.

My bill calls for vehicle liability. School bus drivers and police know that vehicle liability is the only measure which will protect Ontario school children, because it will allow convictions to be made. I want to know, Mr Palladini, is it your intention to kill my bill?

1440

**Hon Al Palladini (Minister of Transportation):** I would like to tell the honourable member that the safety of our children in and around school buses is of primary importance to the government of Ontario and the Ministry of Transportation. I appreciate the member's interest in school bus safety, and I thank him gallantly for his efforts because I believe he has succeeded in bringing this issue to a highlight where it's most worthy.

I have told the member that my ministry is looking at how we can introduce or incorporate his bill into our spring road safety bill; my staff is presently working on that. I've actually asked the member for his support in ensuring that the law is effective, that whatever law we introduce will be effective.

**Mr Hoy:** I've been trying since December to get my bill before a committee, but the government has done nothing but stall.

Minister, you have advised me on three separate occasions that this government opposes vehicle liability. I have addressed all your concerns, yet you refuse to tell me what this bill would involve and you want me to trust you.

I have worked closely with Larry and Colleen Marcuzzi in recent months. In spite of their pain, they have spoken out publicly to support my bill and explain why vehicle liability is essential to try and spare other parents the grief they have known. In good conscience, I cannot and will not make deals with the minister unless I'm absolutely certain that the minister's bill will provide the remedy of vehicle liability. Mr Palladini, will you pass a law which will give vehicle liability? Will you do that to protect the children of Ontario?



**Hon Mr Palladini:** School bus safety is more than one law or a fine. I want to take a comprehensive approach, to see how we can build on what we have and make it worthwhile.

I'm also interested in seeing the recommendation of the inquest presently taking place because I believe there is going to be a lot of positive input from that inquest that we might possibly be able to incorporate into our spring bill.

The current fines are among the highest in North America and there are several measures we already have in our road safety plan that we want to build on. Certainly a bus is at the very top of the list. I'm willing to work with the member to see how best we can come up with remedies that will work, that can be enforced, and most important, that when it does get into a court of law, we will get a conviction.

**Mr Hoy:** Minister, you've hit on part of the problem. You can raise the fines under the current law as high as you want, but you can't get convictions because you cannot get vehicle driver identification.

On Tuesday night in Windsor the minister said: "We have to have the proper reporting measures. We have to have safeguards in place that a bus driver is not just going to randomly pick a licence number and report that this particular person has obstructed the bus or disobeyed."

I've been working with school bus drivers for almost a year. I have learned the depth of caring that drivers have for their precious carload. Almost all of them speak of the children as "my kids." They are professionals. They are the ones who watch in helpless horror every time a car passes illegally. They never know how long luck will hold out for their kids.

For the minister to suggest that bus drivers would randomly pick a licence number is an insult. It is a disrespect to Ontario bus drivers. It is a disrespect to the Marcuzzi family and the memory of their daughter Ryan. Will you not change your mind and introduce vehicle liability that's meaningful?

**Hon Mr Palladini:** I would once again remind the member that I am very supportive of his bill in principle, and there are some things within his bill that I believe we can incorporate in our spring road safety bill. It's something we've been building on since October 1995. I want to go on record saying it's going to be an ongoing thing until road safety in the province of Ontario is the best in North America. Accidents involving school buses are a rarity, but even the rarity I don't want to happen.

Again, I want to say to the member, help us come up with remedies that we'll be able to enforce and make them. We are going to be taking a look at what we can incorporate as early as we can as part of our spring road safety bill to make sure that we have things tied down.

#### TUITION FEES

**Mr Alvin Curling (Scarborough North):** My question is to the minister of colleges and universities. Yesterday you quietly announced that tuition fees in Ontario colleges and universities will be increasing by as much as from 10% to 20%. Based on your Ministry of Education

data, this means students could be paying as much as \$3,500 per year. This does not include books, accommodation or other basic living expenses. Students who face a real unemployment figure of over 25% are now supposed to come up with as much as \$500 more for tuition when many can't even find a job, as you know.

Minister, where in the Common Sense Revolution did you promise to make post-secondary education unaffordable and inaccessible by increasing tuition fees by as much as 40% in two years?

**Hon John Snobelen (Minister of Education and Training):** I did make an announcement yesterday that the government will be allowing our universities and colleges to use increasing discretion in setting their fees. We obviously did not increase the floor of tuitions in Ontario because we believe that would not be responsible, particularly in the absence of an income-contingent plan so our students can use an income-contingent plan to repay loans.

We think that's critical to the future of the post-secondary education system in Ontario. The Smith commission made that point in a recent review, and we have asked our federal colleagues to move quickly to get an income-contingent plan in Ontario so that we can assist students to pay their share of their education costs. I would encourage the member opposite to please use his good offices, as we're using ours, to make sure the federal government gives a response to our request in the coming budget. I hope the member opposite will do that.

**Mr Curling:** Let's not blame the feds. If you want to marry that program, the feds are not buying in on that.

Minister, in comparison to your own study that said, "When provincial government operational support for universities is examined, Ontario is at or near the bottom of ranking of Canadian provinces," and went on to say that we even lagged behind in government support as compared to most universities in the US, during the election Mike Harris said, "Post-secondary education has never been more important for the future of Ontario's young people."

Is being 10th out of 10 and having the lowest provincial government support for the post-secondary education where you want it to be, and why is it that your government has such a poor record for supporting post-secondary education?

**Hon Mr Snobelen:** I believe our post-secondary system is important to the future of the province, and that's why this government has done exactly what it said to the people of Ontario it would do in the last election. We have, as you know, put a committee out to look at what is the future of post-secondary education, how must we address this important sector. We are digesting that report now, working with other partners.

But we haven't waited until that report was completely digested, we have moved. We were able to announce before Christmas that we have stable funding for our colleges and universities through the next year. We made the announcement that we made yesterday. We have instituted, as you know, a \$100-million student trust fund to help those students most in need.

In our announcement yesterday, and I'm surprised the member opposite would fail to mention this, we called



upon universities and colleges, who make use of this increased room, to hold back 30% for student aid. We've increased the funding through the Ontario student assistance program and we have done a variety of measures including, for the first time, a merit scholarship that will reward students who are in the top 2% of their class by paying all of their tuition.

We are moving very quickly, we are moving to help students and we are moving to improve our post-secondary education system. But we need the help of the federal government to make one of the important moves, and that's —

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Thank you. Final supplementary.

1450

**Mr Curling:** Minister, I really do expect better from you. You have made post-secondary education more unaffordable and inaccessible than ever before. You and I know that. While increasing student tuition by 40% in two years, you have also informed students that they will have to repay a larger portion of their loans, from \$6,000 to \$7,000, and Vicky Smallman, Ontario chair of Canadian Federation of Students, who is in the gallery with us today, has denounced your government's hike in the loan forgiveness cap.

Increasing student aid doesn't change the reality students are facing, and you know that. Poor job prospects and student bankruptcies are currently at record levels. Students are afraid of taking on debt they are not able to repay. The number of students defaulting on loans has tripled as a result of double-digit tuition fee increases brought in by you and the previous NDP government.

Minister, why have you made our universities and colleges places that only the rich will be able to attend?

**Hon Mr Snobelen:** I'm shocked and surprised that the member opposite would make this into a partisan issue. The future of our post-secondary education system is more important than that. The member opposite knows full well that when his party was in power —

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker:** Order. Minister?

**Hon Mr Snobelen:** Unfortunately some of the colleagues of the member opposite would also like to turn this into a partisan issue.

You know full well that your party raised tuition fees when you were in power. The member opposite knows that this government has done more to increase and improve aid to the students most in need in this province than any government in the last 20 years, and that is the record. You also know that the students' share of tuition fees —

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker:** Minister?

**Hon Mr Snobelen:** It seems to me that, when we look at the record of the previous government and we look at what has happened in this climate, it becomes important that we have an income-contingent loans package available to students so they can meet their obligation for post-secondary education. Everyone knows that, and I'm calling on my colleagues' help to get that action from the federal government now.

It is with unmitigated gall that the member opposite would talk about opportunities for students from a government that raised taxes and lowered that opportunity and a government that raised the debt those students must now pay. I find that incredible.

## USE OF GOVERNMENT FACILITIES

**Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River):** I wanted to ask this question of the Premier. I'll ask it of the Minister of Municipal Affairs since it concerns his ongoing activities.

As indicated earlier, your print room, a taxpayer-paid-for print room, is pumping out material for the Progressive Conservative Party. I wanted to ask you this: These were two unfolded leaflets. It's clear they've come off the printer. This one doesn't identify PC caucus services at all; it refers to the Progressive Conservative Party. It's got the self-addressed, stamped envelope which taxpayers are paying for. Among other things, what it does is ask people if they want to join the PC Party or contribute to the Progressive Conservative Party.

We all mail material from this building to promote our point of view on the debate, but we don't ask people to join the party; we don't ask people to donate money to the party. Can you explain why you're using your Queen's Park, taxpayer-paid printing privileges to publish materials —

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Thank you.

**Hon Al Leach (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing):** I don't know anything about the piece of paper that the member's waving around, what it says or what it's for or what it was intended to do. From what he said, it sounds like it would be good information for the public to have, but I don't know where it was initiated from or who it was sent to or why.

**Mr Hampton:** So that the minister knows, I've sent a copy over to him. The real issue is this: With you and your government, this keeps happening over and over again. You send out a leaflet that pretends the megacity legislation is already law. The Speaker found a prima facie case of contempt against you. Then, the next couple of days later, you send out massive numbers of faxes from your offices, once again promoting your megacity, but you try to pretend that they're anonymous. This also earned rebuke from the Speaker.

Now you're using Queen's Park, taxpayer-paid printing presses to turn out material that says to people, "Join and contribute to the Conservative Party." It doesn't have your legislative address on it; it has the Ontario PC Party address on it. When are you going to stop having such contempt for the Legislature of Ontario and the taxpayers of Ontario?

**Hon Mr Leach:** I can only repeat that I have no idea what the member's talking about with respect to this particular pamphlet, which I assume somebody over there just sent over here. To my knowledge, I don't know anything about this. I have never seen it before. As I mentioned, it looks like information that people of the greater Toronto area would be glad to have. I'm sure whoever is sending this to them is providing it to them with the best of intent. Beyond saying that I think the information looks quite informative, I can't make any additional comment.



**Mr Hampton:** I sent it over to the minister because I assumed he could read. I assumed he would look at it and he would see, gee, that it doesn't say, "Return to the Progressive Conservative caucus at Queen's Park"; it says, "Return to the Ontario Progressive Conservative Party, 120 Adelaide Street." It doesn't ask people about their comments on legislation; it says, "Join and contribute to the Conservative Party."

Just to bring you up to speed, we sent our video team over to your print room and you've got thousands of these outside your print room. A reasonable person would draw a conclusion about where they came from.

What I find even more incredible is that when the city of Toronto sends out material to dispute your megacity claims, you say that they're using taxpayers' money improperly. You owe the taxpayers of Ontario an apology and you owe the taxpayers of Ontario some cash. Will you reimburse the taxpayers of Ontario for printing partisan Progressive Conservative Party literature?

**Hon Mr Leach:** I have absolutely no knowledge of who printed this or who paid for it or who's going to pay for it. All I know is that they've sent something over that outlines seven benefits to the people of Toronto if this legislation passes. It says that it will (1) create jobs and attract investment, (2) save you money, (3) reduce duplication and overlap, (4) be more accountable and less confusing, (5) enhance neighbourhood output, (6) reduce the size of government and (7) mean better decision-making.

I think that's excellent information to get out to the people of Ontario. I don't know who sent it, I don't know who printed it, I don't know who's paying for it, but it is excellent information and I thank the member for bringing it to my attention.

**The Speaker:** New question, leader of the third party.

**Mr Hampton:** I would say again to the minister: You might want to read the part that says, "If you'd like to learn more about the Ontario Progressive Conservative Party, please call the following — 1-800-903-MIKE."

1500

#### ATTORNEY GENERAL'S COMMENTS

**Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River):** My next question is to the Deputy Premier. On November 7, 1996, the Attorney General made some very disturbing and inappropriate statements regarding two members of this Legislature and their visit to the family support plan. I won't give you the quotes; they're in Hansard. We all know; we can read the quotes.

We've obtained an independent legal opinion regarding the AG's comments from Professor Alan Young of Osgoode Law School that states, "In this case, the Attorney General appears to have bypassed the conventional and usual method of initiating a police investigation and as a result of his actions, he has acted in a manner inconsistent with the duties of the chief law officer of the province." As Deputy Premier, do you think it's appropriate for the Attorney General to be making statements that appear to compromise the independence of the office of the Attorney General and the police?

**Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance):** No I don't, and I don't believe the Attorney

General of this province has done that. Being a former Attorney General himself, the member opposite knows well that the police are responsible for investigating any alleged incident and they're responsible for making the decision whether to lay charges or not. Police conduct their investigations independent of government and I believe that has been done.

**Mr Hampton:** I'll read for you again the comments of the Attorney General. He said, "There was a break-in"; "I said it was because there was a break-in"; and later again, "In fact, we all know who was involved because they've admitted they were there."

Professor Young states:

"I have concluded that the statements made by the Attorney General on November 7, 1996 were inconsistent with the role and function of the chief law officer of this province...."

"His actions and statements compromised the independence of the office of the Attorney General; his actions and statements compromised the independence of the police; his actions and statements have the potential of impairing the integrity of the trial process."

The AG pre-empted a police investigation. His comments directly related to the matter that was under investigation by the police. Any judgemental statement made by the Attorney General regarding an ongoing criminal investigation has significant implications for the carriage of justice. As Deputy Premier, would you agree that the Attorney General has compromised the justice system?

**Hon Mr Eves:** I'm not going to get into a debate about a legal opinion or discuss a legal opinion in the House. I think it's quite clear that the Ministry of the Attorney General had no direct involvement in any investigation whatsoever. I think it's also clear that police are responsible for investigating this incident or any other incidents. It's quite clear today — I don't believe that any charges have been laid against anybody arising out of the particular incident that you're talking about. If in the future there are any, that will be done because police have determined in their own independent investigation that charges should be laid.

**Mr Hampton:** I had hoped that if the Attorney General could not have a neutral mind, the Deputy Premier would have a neutral mind. This is one of the foremost constitutional scholars in Canada. He says:

"I have concluded that the actions and the statements of the Attorney General on November 7, 1996 were violative of the historical and constitutional traditions of the Attorney General. Although some people may conclude that the Attorney General's initial comments were simply an inadvertent and careless response to heated interjections by members of the assembly, it must not be forgotten that he repeated these comments a number of times after having had time to reflect upon his comments and regain his composure."

This is someone who's read the Hansard transcripts. This is someone who is a scholar in this particular area. He says this clearly impairs justice. Minister, I believe the Attorney General has no alternative but to resign. He has impaired the judicial process.



**Hon Mr Eves:** Arising out of this particular incident and to ensure absolute fairness, the Ministry of the Attorney General determined there should be independent counsel available from outside Toronto to provide the Metropolitan Toronto police, if they needed any outside counsel, with that advice, and that was done. I am not going to comment on the basis or the facts upon which some lawyer decided to offer up an —

**Interjection:** Some lawyer.

**Hon Mr Eves:** A lawyer. Yes, some lawyer. He's a lawyer, is he not?

**Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma):** He's a very well-known lawyer.

**Hon Mr Eves:** Fine, there are lots of very well qualified lawyers who have lots of different opinions about lots of different issues in lots of different circumstances.

**Mr Hampton:** You just make up the rules as you go along, Ernie.

**Hon Mr Eves:** No, absolutely not. I would say to the honourable member that the police alone are responsible for investigating and laying a charge in a particular incident, and if in fact a charge ends up being laid in this incident, it will have been their decision and their decision only.

#### GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING

**Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines):** My question is to the Treasurer of the province because he pays for things through the taxpayers of this province. The member for Windsor-Sandwich raised the issue with the Speaker earlier today of a constituent of hers in Windsor-Sandwich who called the 1-800 number from TV ads and asked specifically for information on health care. He was told he would be sent something from the Harris vision on health care. This person feels that this person has been misled by this ad. In fact, the person, I understand, was sent an application for membership in the Progressive Conservative Party.

Minister, would you now do what is right? Would you do one of two things: Would you either have the Conservative Party pay for all the ads you have on the air at this time, or would you withdraw them so the taxpayers aren't stuck with the bill and so you don't gain an unfair advantage on the opposition in the debates that take place in this House and in this province?

**Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance):** I certainly have no knowledge of any such ads. I would refer the question to the Minister of Health, who may have such knowledge.

**Hon David Johnson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Minister of Health, Government House Leader):** There have been no health ads on TV. What the individual may have seen, and I really don't know what the individual did see, but it's possible the individual saw the party ad. We made it clear — the first government, I guess, probably, in the history of governments to actually pay for advertising to communicate with the people of Ontario. It's quite possible the individual could have seen an advertisement: some \$800,000, party money, no taxpayers' money; that's likely what the individual was responding to. If the members opposite

wish to clarify which particular ad, then we would know which ad the individual was responding to.

**Mr Bradley:** The ads to which we are making reference in this House, in addition to the Conservative Party ads, are the ads that are paid for entirely by the taxpayers of this province. They are clearly partisan, self-serving government propaganda with the Premier's picture on them. You are spending hundreds of thousands, now into millions of dollars; you are spending more money in the last few weeks on self-serving government ads paid for by the taxpayer than the Conservative Party spent on television advertising in the last election campaign.

If you will not withdraw those ads — and that's what you should do — will you have the Conservative Party pay for them, and for the ads that are still on the air, will you place at the bottom of those ads, "Paid for with the tax dollars of the people of the province of Ontario"?

**Hon David Johnson:** This is rather interesting in view of the fact that, for example, in the year 1990-91, in the last year of the Liberal administration, some \$22.3 million —

**Mrs Sandra Papatello (Windsor-Sandwich):** Deception.

**Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands):** You were going to be different.

*Interjections.*

**Hon David Johnson:** Obviously, there's a little sensitivity to this, Mr Speaker, because the Liberal government spent \$22.3 million on advertising. The Liberal government did not pay for ads through their party, as the Progressive Conservative Party has paid for ads, used their own money, not taxpayers' money, to pay for ads of a partisan nature.

*Interjections.*

**Mr Bradley:** Don't tell everybody you're paying for that.

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Members for St Catharines, Windsor-Sandwich, and Kingston and The Islands, would you come to order please.

**Hon David Johnson:** Mr Speaker, the —

**Mrs Papatello:** You're closing emergency services.

**The Speaker:** Member for Windsor-Sandwich, I'm warning you now, come to order.

**Hon David Johnson:** I'll try it again. The partisan ads have been paid for by the party, some \$800,000. The ads, which I will say will be under half of what the Liberals spent in their last year, under what the NDP spent, are ads involving ministries, conveying information to the people of Ontario. Our record is the best, bar none, in terms of expenditures on advertising to the people of Ontario.

1510

#### SCHOOL BOARDS

**Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma):** I have a question of the Minister of Education and Training with regard to the proposals for hearings on Bill 104 that the government has put forward on the order paper.

We know there already have been over 400 individual requests submitted from people just in the Toronto area to make presentations on Bill 104 even before there have been any advertisements requesting submissions. We



understand there will be another 150 requests delivered to the Clerk's office today, so that means over 600 just from the Toronto area.

Does the minister consider it sufficient to have just 10 hours of hearings in Toronto and four days of hearings in other parts of Ontario on such an important bill that affects school boards all over Ontario and all schools, students and parents across the province?

**Hon John Snobelen (Minister of Education and Training):** Obviously this is a matter of some importance to the people of Ontario as we move from an old system of education to a new system of education, as we propose reducing the number of politicians involved in education from 1,900 to some 700, and make a variety of other improvements that will allow us to increase student achievement right across the province. I realize this is an important issue.

The member for Algoma's government commissioned the Sweeney commission to look at this, to reduce the number of school boards across the province. We've built on that work. By the way, Mr Sweeney conducted over a year of consultations — over 19,000 submissions from the public. Since that report has been submitted, I have twice asked the members of this chamber to talk to their constituents and give us some input, which we have addressed in our bill that's before the House.

So yes, the government House leader and the other House leaders will work, I am sure, to have some public consultation on this bill, but I want to underline this fact: There has already been an extraordinary amount of conversation about —

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Supplementary.

**Mr Wildman:** The parents of Ontario want to know if this government wants to hear their views about a piece of legislation that, as the minister himself has said, will bring about important changes in the way education is delivered to the students of Ontario. We've got four days proposed with only one location in northern Ontario.

I have a letter from Ron Tough of Sudbury saying that parents in that community want the opportunity to make presentations on this bill. I've heard from Beverly Rizzi of the Mothers for Education in Thunder Bay, who says to fail to include Thunder Bay as part of the north is to ignore the needs of thousands of children and parents.

Does this government want to hear from people across Ontario? Do you want to hear from parents across northern Ontario about a bill that is going to change their relationship with their boards, change the relationship of trustees with parents and students and change the boundaries to produce very large boards across northern Ontario?

**Hon Mr Snobelen:** First of all I have to say that I find some of the points made by the member for Algoma to be somewhat startling, given that his government looked at this, and I think that many of his colleagues are on record as saying they are in support of what is in Bill 104, so I'm somewhat surprised by that representation.

We have a presentation, as I understand, before this chamber, to have public consultations. I want to emphasize, though, that while we have to have public consultations and I think they're necessary for this bill, certainly those people who are not able to attend, what-

ever the final arrangement is, as you know, will be able to make written submissions, as is the normal case. I think the member for Algoma knows that.

I can go over the litany of studies that have been conducted on this subject.

**Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine):** So you think that's enough, four days in the rest of the province is enough.

**Hon Mr Snobelen:** As the member knows, there's more than that allowed for in what's before the chamber at the moment.

We need to get on with public consultations on this. Our students deserve a better system of education in this province. We need to get this legislation to the point where we can have public consultation so we can create that better system, so I'd encourage the members opposite to get through second reading so we can get on with public consultation.

## VICTIMS OF VIOLENCE

**Mrs Barbara Fisher (Bruce):** My question this afternoon is to the minister responsible for women's issues. During Wife Assault Prevention Month last November our government announced the creation of the automated and information referral service and the victim notification service. Could you please update the House as to the progress of these two projects.

**Hon Dianne Cunningham (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, minister responsible for women's issues):** Thank you, Mr Speaker, for the opportunity to respond to my colleague. We now have three projects that are active to assist victims of violence through the Solicitor General's ministry and correctional services. The first one, as was mentioned, was the victim notification system, where callers can request information on specific adult offenders in the Ontario corrections system.

The second one is AIRS and it's up and going, an automated information and referral service, which provides general information in both English and French on our criminal justice system.

The last one, which we announced last Friday in London, Ontario, and will be announced in other communities, is that we're adding community information centres, using new technology, using the telephone system, to our informal referral service, both AIRS and VNS, by region, seven days a week, 24 hours a day, providing comprehensive and accessible information to citizens who live all over Ontario. That is our most recent addition to our system.

**Mrs Fisher:** Minister, I was wondering how the women of my riding of Bruce and women throughout the province will benefit from this new AIRS system.

**Hon Mrs Cunningham:** In response, in more detail on the third system that was introduced last Friday, all of us know that we have community information systems. There are centres right across Ontario. They're often referred to as Information — whatever your city is called; in my case it's Information London. We're working with other agencies in the communities. The counsellors staffing the lines in these systems can draw on a broad range of information to help victims of violence connect with the appropriate services within their own community.



The reason we moved in this direction was that there are many areas of the province that don't have the same level of service, and we're concerned about it. They can be hooked in by referring to this 1-888-579-2888 number, which was announced some time in November. We're very proud of this hassle-free system for people who really need good information to help them, especially those who are victims of violence.

#### LONG-TERM CARE

**Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East):** My question is to the Minister of Health. There's a facility on Hamilton Mountain called Macassa Lodge. It's a seniors retirement home and nursing home with 270 residents. It has been under renovation since 1988. We have a letter of approval from the previous minister, Ruth Grier, in March 1995, approving the final phase of a renovation project for \$8.5 million.

We've also learned that your government has chosen to cut that funding and take away the \$8.5 million of provincial share for the much-needed renovations to Macassa Lodge. We're talking about senior citizens, an average age of 85, who live in conditions that are very difficult. They're frail. There are health and safety issues.

Minister, in your Common Sense Revolution you promised you would not cut aid and programs for seniors and the disabled. Can you explain to the House what rationale there would be in cutting the funding for Macassa Lodge that had been previously approved?

**Hon David Johnson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Minister of Health, Government House Leader):** I wish I had the details of every facility at my fingertips. Unfortunately, not being given prior knowledge, I don't have the details of this particular lodge. I'd be delighted to look into it. I'm not aware if the funding has been cut or was cut last year and may be reinstated next year.

I will tell the member opposite that last week I made an announcement in Markdale with regard to a long-term-care facility that had been on the books since the mid-1980s that through successive governments — through the Liberal government, through the NDP government — had been essentially approved but the money hadn't flowed. We finally flowed that money, just about a week ago, to improve life for the seniors. This is a facility some 93 years old.

We have been consistent in terms of our health care funding exceeding the commitments we made in the —

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Thank you very much.

1520

**Mr Agostino:** Let me make it clear for the minister. You cut the funding. As of January 31 you took away the \$8.5 million approved a year and a half prior by the NDP government. These are renovations that include making changes so senior citizens don't have a cold draft coming through the windows in their rooms. Many of these seniors are living four to a room with a communal bathroom for the whole floor.

Talk about roofs that have problems, talk about boiler systems that have a problem, talk about the lack of air-

conditioning systems, where they're using big fans to keep seniors cool under some very difficult circumstances in the summer. We're talking about basic health and safety issues. I'm astonished that you wouldn't know about it, because your member for Hamilton Mountain sent you a letter a few weeks ago outlining to you the concerns and urging you not to cut the funding, but you proceeded to cut the funding. This is a question of health and safety for senior citizens.

Minister, in view of the circumstances I've outlined, will you commit today to reinstate the \$8.5 million in funding that you cut for the final phase of renovations of Macassa Lodge on Hamilton Mountain?

**Hon David Johnson:** I will say in general that this government is very supportive of and has put a great deal of money into services for the elderly in terms of long-term care, community care. Last year we made an announcement of some \$170 million in community care for seniors.

In view of the fact that the matter has been raised here again today, certainly I will check back into this particular situation. The government has been supportive in terms of long-term-care facilities, Markdale being the most recent example, community services, some \$170 million. I'll give my undertaking to the member to recheck this particular situation.

#### OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

**Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre):** My question is to the Minister of Labour. Today, just weeks after two workers were killed at Dofasco in Hamilton, you launched your long-feared attack on the rights of workers and their legal protection in the Occupational Health and Safety Act. Your report starts out by saying you will "streamline the act by eliminating red tape." Workers know what those code words mean. They mean 50-hour workweeks and the elimination of any kind of regulatory protection. On page 30 your report goes on to say that some businesses think the level of fines for violating this act are too high. It says, "a barrier to businesses in Ontario."

Minister, given your track record of attacking and taking away the rights of workers in virtually every piece of legislation you've ever touched, if you want workers to have any confidence at all in this process you've started, you must today guarantee that you won't ram through legislation that takes away their rights under the Occupational Health and Safety Act over the opposition of workers and their representatives. Will you —

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Thank you, member.

**Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Labour):** To the member for Hamilton Centre, yes, I'm extremely pleased to announce today that our government, as part of our commitment to making Ontario's workplaces among the safest in the world, launched an occupational health and safety discussion paper. We were not satisfied with the NDP record on health and safety. In fact, the Toronto Workers' Health and Safety Legal Clinic indicated on August 24, 1994, at the committee hearings on Bill 165 that between 1991 and 1993, "the number of workplace



accidents reported to the Ministry" of Labour "was up 38%, the number of critical injuries reported...was up 45%...the number of health and safety complaints received...was up 50%." They go on to say, "These figures do not indicate any trend toward improved health and safety conditions in this province."

I want to tell you we're not happy with your track record, and that's why we have a discussion paper. We're going to consult with our stakeholders and we are going to make sure we have among the safest workplaces in the world.

**The Speaker:** Supplementary. Leader of the third party.

**Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River):** It's interesting to listen to your rhetoric, because everyone knows that when you start dealing with labour standards, it means labour standards go down.

Your paper talks about greater flexibility for selected employers, ie, give them more room to do what they want. It talks about privatizing some of the work of the Ministry of Labour's health and safety branch. It talks about relaxing the rules on health and safety committees.

You should know the concern about your government's records. The steelworkers at Gold Corp in Red Lake can't get action from your ministry on their health and safety complaints. The auto workers have been waiting for action on an occupational disease panel report showing a link between metalworking fluids and lung disease. Your response? "Wipe out the panel." When two workers died at Dofasco, the Steelworkers union couldn't get into the investigation to express their viewpoint until after our labour critic forced you to do it.

Minister, if you want a productive consultation process, make a commitment today that there'll be no changes to the Occupational Health and Safety Act —

**The Speaker:** Thank you. Minister?

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** I would just like to remind you of your track record and I'd like to demonstrate to you the improvements we've made.

When they were in power from 1992 to 1995, the number of critical injuries rose from 617 to 824; inspections declined by 25%; field visits declined by 20%; MOL orders declined by 20%. I want to tell you, since we've taken over, inspections have increased in the year 1995-96 by 35%.

We have a new integrated and coordinated vision for health and safety and we will have among the safest workplaces in the world. Our paper is designed to ensure that we don't focus on the process. We want outcomes.

## CONSUMER PROTECTION

**Mr Dan Newman (Scarborough Centre):** My question is for the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations. People in my riding of Scarborough Centre and indeed across Ontario are asking about these so-called loan brokers. They are concerned because they charge expensive up-front fees to people applying for loans, refuse them the loan they had promised and refuse to return the fees that the unsuspecting consumer has paid. I know the Loan Brokers Act provides some protection,

but what else is the government doing to protect consumers from these corrupt practices?

**Hon David H. Tsubouchi (Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations):** Our government is committed to protecting the public and consumers against unscrupulous loan brokers. Certainly, we must inform the public that it is illegal in this province to charge an up-front fee for a loan until that loan has actually been given.

The situation over the last 10 years or more has been such that a loan broker, even after he has been charged or convicted of illegal practices, can still continue to provide these types of illegal loans to the public. I'm very happy to announce and to inform people that through our red tape initiatives we are introducing measures which will allow the ministry to issue cease-and-desist orders to unscrupulous loan brokers who have been convicted or who have been charged. It is a very important step.

I encourage the members opposite to join with us — and I thank the member — to make sure we stamp out these unscrupulous practices by loan brokers, because it is a good move for consumers.

**Mr Newman:** This change to the Loan Brokers Act is indeed good news. I understand the ministry's investigations unit is having some success and has been laying charges of fraud against a number of these loan brokers. Do you have any statistics regarding the number of charges laid and how these cease-and-desist orders will help in the battle against these unethical practices?

**Hon Mr Tsubouchi:** Once again I thank the member for Scarborough Centre. The ministry has laid a total of 448 charges under the Loan Brokers Act. These include charges against six companies and seven individuals. We are also working with other jurisdictions in Canada and the United States to monitor the activities of these unscrupulous loan brokers so we can act in a unified way to stamp out this very illegal process. Once again I encourage members — I see they have a fair amount of support for this initiative — to really fight and to stamp out illegal loan brokers and protect the consumers of the province.

1530

## HIGHWAY SAFETY

**Mr Jean-Marc Lalonde (Prescott and Russell):** My question is to the Minister of Transportation. I have a report from the OPP indicating that there were 24 major traffic accidents in the past eight months on a stretch of Highway 17 in my riding that has been known for many years as the "killer strip." During that period of eight months this 20-kilometre stretch of Highway 17 from Rockland to Orléans has claimed four lives and seriously injured 14 persons, including an OPP constable, Willy Flint.

Will you make the commitment today that the widening of Highway 17 to four lanes from Trim Road to Clarence will be completed before dumping that section of Highway 17 to the municipalities?

**Hon Al Palladini (Minister of Transportation):** I certainly do feel we must do whatever we can in making sure that highways are safe and loss of lives is prevented.



Our government is focusing the few dollars we have on making sure we maintain the provincial infrastructure in the condition that will also contribute to safety. As far as future expansion of Highway 17 is concerned, we're obviously going to be taking a look at how best we can spend the limited dollars on projects that are much-needed.

**Mr Lalonde:** That has been scheduled for many, many years. Thousands of my constituents drive on this dangerous highway every day to go to work in the nation's capital. Our study shows that the traffic flow is in excess of 18,000 cars per day.

The concept design is done. The public hearing has taken place and some parcels of land have already been purchased. The people of Prescott and Russell are anxiously awaiting a commitment on your part in order to say that the loss of a friend, a father or a sister has not been totally in vain. Will you make sure that this stretch of Highway 17 called the "killer strip" is put back on your priority list before it becomes a municipal responsibility?

**Hon Mr Palladini:** I certainly appreciate and understand some of the necessities that are needed in Ontario, but this government is going to be spending with fiscal responsibility in mind and making sure that whatever is a priority in the province is what we're going to focus on.

I understand that everything must be done to safeguard, whatever it takes, to make sure that our highways are safe. Our people basically do initiate as far as looking for properties and future expansion is concerned. That has been an ongoing thing. I can assure the member that our staff at MTO will be more than willing to help work with the member just to see how things have progressed to this point and to see what else can be done in the future to make it easier for his constituents.

#### MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

**Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine):** My question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. I want to read to you from Hansard, your quote of January 14: "The trustees will also have the power to review sales of assets, and if there was ever any doubt about whether that power was necessary, it disappeared on December 16. That's the day when East York council voted to explore options for giving away public property to a non-profit foundation, giving away buildings built and paid for by the taxpayers of East York. Having a board of trustees" is necessary, and you go on.

I want to inform you that in 1946 the municipality of East York dedicated the whole entire city block where the city hall is to the memory of the men and women who fought and died in the Second World War, and they granted it in perpetuity to the Royal Canadian Legion, Branches 10, 11, 22 and 345. It's a war memorial. East York council was right to try to pass a resolution to make sure you couldn't go ahead with your plans to sell it off to the highest bidder.

You owe them an apology. Will you instruct your trustees to approve the council resolution that indicates

they want to transfer ownership of that property to the East York Foundation as a cultural and artistic facility?

**Hon Al Leach (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing):** I never at any time indicated that we were going to sell any building in East York to the highest bidder, so let's make sure that's correct.

The motion that was passed by the council of the borough of East York stated that they wanted to transfer the assets of the borough of East York to a non-profit corporation. The only reason they wanted to do that was a result of the proposal to create a single city. I think that's inappropriate; I really do. I believe that the mayor of the borough of East York was also quoted saying that he would ensure every asset that wasn't nailed down would be transferred, and I don't think that's appropriate.

**Ms Lankin:** That resolution by city council was passed on December 16, and it was passed because of your comments that said that you were looking forward with relish to selling off those six city halls, another one of your arrogant little quips that you made to the mayors. They reported it out and it's been reported in the media.

The non-profit foundation that this resolution by city council refers to is the East York Foundation. That is a foundation that was incorporated by legislation in this legislation, Bill Pr38, 1965. It was set up with a board of directors including True Davidson, one of the true fighters for the municipality of East York. It has its purpose. It's set out in the legislation. It is to receive, maintain, manage and control, and use donations for charitable purposes. That block and the buildings thereon are all part of a war memorial. City council does nothing on that block without checking with the Legion and getting the Legion's agreement.

Will you guarantee that you will direct the trustees to approve city council's direction so that the Legion and the men and women whose memories are commemorated, men and women who died in the war —

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Thank you, member.

**Hon Mr Leach:** I have absolutely no bones to pick with any non-profit corporation in the borough of East York. I think they are to be commended for having such an organization. That's not the point. It's the borough taking action to transfer assets that belong to the taxpayers of the borough of East York to a non-profit corporation prior to a single city being incorporated.

As for giving direction to the trustees, I don't give direction to the trustees. Their terms of reference are included in the bill. They will act independently and take whatever steps and actions they think are appropriate with respect to municipal expenditures.

#### FARM PRACTICES PROTECTION

**Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland):** My question is to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. Back in 1988 the Farm Practices Protection Act was passed. Better known as the right-to-farm legislation, it was all about protecting farmers from some nuisance lawsuits relating to noise, odour and dust. I understand that there has been a series of meetings throughout Ontario, giving farmers an opportunity to comment on this particular act.



Maybe you could inform this House as to what motivated these consultation meetings and what kind of feedback you're receiving from those meetings.

**Hon Noble Villeneuve (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, minister responsible for francophone affairs):** I thank the honourable member for his question. Yes, we have pre-bill consultation. We must strengthen the protection that farmers must have when they produce the food that is so very important to our economy and indeed to our persons.

We have good turnouts at these pre-bill meetings. We've had half a dozen so far, well over 100 people at every meeting. We're getting information from all across the spectrum as to what farmers feel they need to protect their right to produce food. It's going very, very well and I certainly look forward to presenting this Legislature with a bill to protect farmers and food producers in the near future.

**Mr Galt:** It's most gratifying to hear of the kind of turnouts you've been getting at some of these meetings. There's increasing municipal authority, and some municipal councils think they have ability to pass bylaws that may actually impede some of our farm practices. What measures will you be taking to ensure that there will in fact be an equitable balance for both farmers and those who live in the rural community?

**Hon Mr Villeneuve:** I've had the opportunity of discussing this with my colleague in BC — they've just had that sort of legislation — and also with my colleague in Quebec. They have had some difficulty in dealing with autonomous municipalities. We're getting advice, everything from grandfathering the fact that food producers are not subject to the bylaws to rescinding the bylaws. We are listening very closely to what our partners in the food production end are telling us and we will be enacting what appears to be the best solution to protect farmers and food producers.

1540

## PETITIONS

### MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

**Mr Mario Sergio (Yorkview):** I have a petition which is addressed to the Legislature of Ontario and I'm going to read it.

"Whereas 'bigger government is not better' and the Mike Harris government has no right to dictate a megacity upon the citizens of Metro Toronto;

"Whereas the megacity is being imposed on 2.3 million citizens in Metro Toronto without giving people a voice in the future of their cities and neighbourhoods;

"Whereas a megacity could lead to mega property tax increases, mega user fees and mega cuts in services;

"Whereas the Tories never proposed abolishing local government in favour of bigger government during the election campaign;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario as follows:

"To give the 2.3 million people in Metro Toronto a say in the future of their cities and stop the imposition of a megacity."

I concur and I will affix my signature to it.

## OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

**Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre):** I have a petition from the members of the United Steelworkers of America and the Canadian Auto Workers Union. It reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Harris government has begun a process to open the Occupational Health and Safety Act of Ontario; and

"Whereas this act is the single most important piece of legislation for working people since it is designed to protect our lives, safety and health while at work and allow us to return home to our families in the same condition in which we left; and

"Whereas the government has made it clear that they intend to water down the act and weaken the rights of workers under the law, including the right to know, the right to participate and especially the right to refuse unsafe work; and

"Whereas this government has already watered down proper training of certified committee members;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario not to alter the Occupational Health and Safety Act or erode the rights of workers any further and ensure strict enforcement of the legislation."

On behalf of my caucus, I add my name to theirs.

## FIREARMS CONTROL

**Mr David Tilson (Dufferin-Peel):** I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the Liberal government of Canada has passed Bill C-68, An Act Respecting Firearms and Other Weapons; and

"Whereas we welcome real gun control, and support those portions of Bill C-68 which provide tougher penalties for the criminal use of firearms, new offences related to firearm smuggling and trafficking, and a ban on paramilitary weapons; and

"Whereas existing laws requiring the registration of handguns have done little to reduce the number of crimes committed with handguns or lower the volume of handguns smuggled into Canada; and

"Whereas the national gun registration provisions of Bill C-68 will result in a massive misallocation of the limited resources available to law enforcement agencies, with no practical effect on the traffic in illegal firearms, or the use of guns by violent criminals; and

"Whereas the gun registration provisions of Bill C-68 will take police officers off the street and involve them in bureaucracy rather than fighting crime and will make the task of real gun control more difficult and dangerous for police officers;

"We, the undersigned, respectfully petition the province of Ontario to continue to urge the government of Canada to repeal from Bill C-68 those provisions for a compulsory registration of all firearms."

I have signed this petition.

## TVONTARIO

**Mrs Lyn McLeod (Fort William):** I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.



"Whereas TVOntario has been providing Ontarians of all ages with high-quality educational programs and services delivered through television and other media for 25 years;

"Whereas TVOntario provides universal access to educational broadcasting in the most effective way possible;

"Whereas TVOntario provides essential broadcast services to communities in northern Ontario;

"Whereas TVOntario has an extensive community-based advisory network spanning the province;

"Whereas TVOntario is committed to increasing net self-generated revenues by 15% every year;

"Therefore, we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To formally commit to the province's continued support of TVOntario as a publicly owned educational network."

This is signed by a large number of constituents from my riding. I've affixed my signature as I am in full agreement with the sentiments.

#### FIREARMS CONTROL

**Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale):** I have a petition related to gun control, with a different point of view.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas violence involving firearms is unacceptably common; and

"Whereas the requirement that firearms be registered as proposed by the federal government is reasonable;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately withdraw all opposition to the federal gun control legislation.

"Further, we demand that all money that would have been spent to oppose the federal gun control legislation instead be spent on the prevention of domestic violence and on services for victims of domestic violence."

I thoroughly agree with this petition, and I affix my signature.

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Petitions? Are there — yes?

#### ADJOURNMENT MOTION

**Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands):** Mr Speaker, I move adjournment of the House.

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** The member for Kingston and The Islands has moved adjournment of the House. Is it the pleasure of the House the motion carry?

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members; this will be a 30-minute bell.

*The division bells rang from 1546 to 1616.*

**The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson):** Mr Gerretsen has moved adjournment of the House.

All those in favour please rise and remain standing until recognized.

All those opposed please rise and remain standing until counted.

**Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers):** The ayes are 15; the nays are 51.

**The Acting Speaker:** I declare the motion lost.

Petitions? I recognize the member for Beaches-Woodbine.

#### ORDER OF BUSINESS

**Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine):** Mr Speaker, I move to proceed to reports by committees.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson):** Is it the wish of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members; there will be a 30-minute bell.

*The division bells rang from 1618 to 1648.*

**The Acting Speaker:** Ms Lankin has moved that we proceed to reports by committees. Those in favour, please rise and remain standing.

Those opposed, please rise and remain standing until counted.

**Clerk of the House:** The ayes are 17; the nays are 50.

**The Acting Speaker:** I declare the motion lost.

**Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre):** Point of order, Mr Speaker.

*Interjections.*

**The Acting Speaker:** Petitions? The Chair recognizes the member for Don Mills.

*Interjections.*

**Ms Lankin:** Point of order. You have to recognize —

**Mrs Boyd:** Point of order.

**The Acting Speaker:** There is nothing out of order.

**Mrs Boyd:** Indeed there is. You haven't heard my point of order.

**The Acting Speaker:** We moved to petitions. The Chair recognized the member for York Mills. He moved that we go to orders of the day.

All those in favour of going to orders of the day? Opposed? In my opinion, the ayes have it.

**Ms Lankin:** Point of order, Mr Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** There will be a 30-minute bell.

*The division bells rang from 1652 to 1722.*

**The Acting Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley):** Will members take their seats, please. Order. Member for Fort York.

**Mr Rosario Marchese (Fort York):** On my way.

**The Acting Speaker:** Mr Turnbull has moved that we move to orders of the day.

All those in favour, please rise and remain standing.

All those opposed, please rise and remain standing.

**Clerk of the House:** The ayes are 49; the nays are 16.

**The Acting Speaker:** I declare the motion carried. Orders of the day.

**Mrs Boyd:** On a point of privilege, Madam Speaker: It is very important that we get on the record as a point of privilege what happened just prior to the calling of the last vote. As the Speaker announced the results of the previous vote, I was on my feet and asking a point of order. The Speaker refused to recognize me, refused to look to this side of the House and deliberately recognized the whip for the government party, knowing what was going to happen, and as he completed answering the vote, looked to the whip for the government party and recog-



nized him, despite the fact that I was clearly asking for a point of order.

Madam Speaker, I understand that you are not in a position where you can counteract what has happened as a result of that Speaker's actions, but it is important that we recognize that the Speaker is there to protect the rights of all members of the House, and particularly to protect the rights of a minority in a House when there is a majority government that can frankly take its merry way whatever happens. That is what we saw happen this afternoon, and it is important for us all to recognize that every time it happens that a Speaker sitting in the chair acts in a partisan rather than a non-partisan manner, it calls into question whether or not this House truly can represent the voices and the votes of all the people of the province of Ontario.

I do not know whether in your position as an deputy Speaker you are able to bring this issue to the table officers and to the Speaker of the House and the other deputy Speakers. I hope you will do so. It is a very serious matter and I hope we do not see this occur again in this House.

**Mrs Lyn McLeod (Fort William):** On a point of order, Madam Speaker, on another issue, obviously: I believe that in moving to the orders of the day that the order which is to be called will be the motion of which we have notice. I understand that you cannot in any way have jurisdiction over the contents of a time allocation motion — as odious as the substance of that motion may be in terms of not only restricting debate in the Legislature, but also restricting the access of the public to hearings and to being able to voice their concerns — but I am concerned and I do believe that this is a point of order which is within the Speaker's jurisdiction.

I'm concerned about the fact that a time allocation motion can only follow three days of debate. It's quite clear in the rules of order that that is the only circumstance under which a time allocation motion can be introduced. Our rules are very rigorous, as you know. I don't suppose there is a tighter set of rules limiting parliamentary debate in any parliamentary jurisdiction in North America or perhaps in any country having a parliamentary process. It is important that the fair spirit and intent of those very rigorous and very restrictive rules be fully observed.

I would submit to you, Madam Speaker, that in a circumstance where three days of debate on a major bill — and I stress the fact that this is a major bill. The implications of this bill are far-reaching, the consequences of the carrying out of this bill, assuming that it's passed, and it's quite clear that the government intends to ram this through, will be ones that are irreversible in their impact. So it is of monumental significance that this bill be given full debate — I would contend full public hearing, but that's an issue you don't have jurisdiction over — but it's one on which we must have full debate. There must be a real understanding of all of the consequences of this bill.

There is a tendency for the government to see this as being a minor bill and a politically popular bill. It is not. It is a major bill. Three days of debate on a major bill before time allocation motion is introduced —

*Interjection.*

**Mrs McLeod:** Madam Speaker, I will wait until the Chair has given you advice and I can complete my point of order.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you. One moment.

**Mrs McLeod:** Do you want me to complete my point of order, and if you seek advice from the Chair subsequent to my point of order, I would certainly understand that. But I have a serious point of order to raise and I would like to complete it because I do believe, if I can come back to it, that, under rules of order that are more rigorous than any parliamentary jurisdiction has to live within, the spirit of three days of debate before a time allocation motion can be introduced needs to be rigorously observed.

I would suggest to you that the spirit of those three days of debate — when there has only been an opportunity for two members of the official opposition and one member of the third party to participate in the debate before the government brings in a time allocation motion, is not in keeping with the spirit of three days of debate. I stress, I am talking about the spirit and intent of the legislation that governs the rules of order in this House.

I also want to add to that the fact that there is no justification for the government suggesting that there has been a filibuster that is preventing debate on this bill. This is a bill which we take seriously. We have entered into the debate seriously. We have a list of people who want to discuss the consequences of this bill. There is no justification for not allowing a full and fair debate that is at least within the intent of what should be minimum debate before introducing time allocation and essentially closure.

**Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma):** On a point of order, Madam Chair, in relation to the point of order raised by my friend the member for Fort William: To make it very clear, so that everyone understands, unlike other controversial pieces of legislation before this House, such as Bill 103, there has not been any attempt, whenever the government has called for debate on Bill 104, to prevent debate. As a matter of fact, every time the bill has been called it has been debated. It has been debated for three days. There has been exchange of opinion and significant debate on this piece of legislation. There has not been filibustering.

1730

*Interjections.*

**The Acting Speaker:** Can I have order so I can hear, please.

**Mr Wildman:** I am just pointing out that normally a motion to close off debate, a motion of time allocation, occurs after significant disruption or filibuster. Neither of those has occurred on this piece of legislation. I have spoken for 90 minutes. The Liberals have had their 90 minutes. There has been a couple of other speakers for half an hour and some Conservative members for half an hour each. There has not been any filibuster on this debate. What is the justification for time allocation?

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you for giving me a moment to confer with the clerks on the point of order and the point of privilege.

First, and I did not seek advice on this, I want to respond to the member for London Centre. I appreciate



her comments about the fact that I was not in the chair at the time. In fact, this is one of the more difficult situations for the deputy Chairs because, as the member knows, I was in my seat at the time as a member. Therefore, although I appreciate your point of privilege, I can certainly assure the member that I concur with her suggestion that this be discussed at the weekly Speakers' meetings. I would say that for all the deputy Speakers, it is most important that when we sit in this chair we be neutral, and I think your point of privilege warrants a discussion.

To the member for Algoma and the member for Fort William on your point of order about the three days' debate, there have been, under the standing orders, three days of debate. Those are the rules. The rules do not stipulate hours. We now will be moving to orders of the day.

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

### TIME ALLOCATION

**Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Environment and Energy):** On behalf of Mr Johnson, I move government notice of motion number 15:

That, pursuant to standing order 46 and notwithstanding any other standing order or special order of the House relating to Bill 104, An Act to improve the accountability, effectiveness and quality of Ontario's school system by permitting a reduction in the number of school boards, establishing an Education Improvement Commission to oversee the transition to the new system, providing for certain matters related to elections in 1997 and making other improvements to the Education Act and the Municipal Elections Act, when Bill 104 is next called as a government order, the Speaker shall put every question necessary to dispose of the second reading stage of the bill without further debate or amendment, and at such time the bill shall be referred to the standing committee on social development;

That the standing committee on social development shall meet to consider the bill for the purpose of conducting public hearings at its regularly scheduled meeting times on Monday, February 17, 1997, Tuesday, February 18, 1997, Monday, February 24, 1997, and Tuesday, February 25, 1997;

That the committee further be authorized to meet to consider the bill for the purpose of conducting public hearings Monday through Thursday the week of March 17, 1997, and be authorized to travel only to Ottawa, Kitchener, Windsor and Sault Ste Marie;

That the standing committee on social development shall be authorized to meet to consider the bill for clause-by-clause consideration commencing Monday, March 24, 1997, from 1 pm until the completion of clause-by-clause;

All proposed amendments shall be filed with the clerk of the committee by 5 pm on March 21, 1997. At 5 pm on Monday, March 24, 1997, those amendments which have not yet been moved shall be deemed to have been moved and the Chair of the committee shall interrupt the proceedings and shall, without further debate or amend-

ment, put every question necessary to dispose of all remaining sections of the bill and any amendments thereto. Any divisions required shall be deferred until all remaining questions have been put and taken in succession with one 20-minute waiting period allowed pursuant to standing order 128(a);

The committee shall report the bill to the House on the first available day following completion of clause-by-clause consideration that reports from committees may be received. In the event that the committee fails to report the bill on the day provided, the bill shall be deemed to be reported to and received by the House;

That upon receiving the report of the standing committee on social development, the Speaker shall put the question for adoption of the report forthwith, which question shall be decided without debate or amendment;

That one hour shall be allotted to consideration of the bill in committee of the whole House. At the end of that time, those amendments which have not yet been moved shall be deemed to have been moved and the Chair of the committee of the whole House shall interrupt the proceedings and shall, without further debate or amendment, put every question necessary to dispose of all remaining sections of the bill and any amendments thereto and report the bill to the House. Any divisions required shall be deferred until all remaining questions have been put, the members called in once and all deferred divisions taken in succession. All amendments proposed to the bill shall be filed with the Clerk of the Assembly by 2 pm on the sessional day on which the bill is considered in committee of the whole House and that the House be authorized to meet beyond its normal adjournment time until completion of the committee of the whole stage of Bill 104;

That, upon receiving the report of the committee of the whole House, the Speaker shall put the question for adoption of the report forthwith, which question shall be decided without debate or amendment and at such time, the bill shall be ordered for third reading;

That one sessional day be allotted to the third reading stage of the bill. At the end of that sessional day, the Speaker shall interrupt the proceedings and shall put every question necessary to dispose of this stage of the bill without further debate or amendment;

That, in the case of any divisions relating to any proceedings on the bill, the division bell shall be limited to five minutes and no deferral of any division pursuant to standing order 28(g) shall be permitted.

**Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma):** On a point of order, Madam Speaker: I would suggest that the House give unanimous consent for the government House leader to move an amendment to this motion which I understand he wishes to put.

1740

**The Acting Speaker:** Is there agreement?

**Hon Mr Sterling:** I request permission to put forward an amendment which we are working out with the opposition parties at this time. Once that amendment is ready, then perhaps we could return the floor to the government House leader to put that amendment forward.

We have about 20 minutes of debate time, if people would like to utilize that time before this particular



motion is passed. Is it agreed that we would split that time so that I would take three minutes and the remaining time —

**Hon David Johnson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Minister of Health, Government House Leader):** It would just take a couple of minutes.

**The Acting Speaker:** Is it agreed? Agreed.

**Hon Mr Sterling:** We are moving a time allocation motion pursuant to standing order 46, which permits the government to move time allocation after three days of debate in this Legislature.

With regard to debate on this bill, as the opposition parties indicated, there have been no dilatory tactics used with regard to this particular piece of legislation until today. However, as you know, there have been dilatory actions used with regard to other pieces of legislation in this House; therefore the government feels it's unfortunate that at this point in time, with the dramatic changes we are making with regard to legislation, it is necessary to move this time allocation motion with regard to this very important piece of legislation.

I want to say that the reason we feel it is necessary to move this and to get on with this and to get second reading over with is that we in this party would like to hear from a number of delegations not only here in Toronto but across Ontario. It is normal, in our Parliament here in Ontario, that we do not like to have our members travelling across the province while the Legislature is in session, because members want to attend this place, they want to be involved in the business of this place; there are other committees sitting in this place, there are other meetings that are taking place. Therefore it is with great reluctance that the House leaders allow their members to travel across the province while the Legislature is sitting.

It is our intent, with regard to having this bill passed, that it be passed now and those public hearings can start immediately.

This is also important for us because as of April 1 we enter into the next election period for the new district school boards which will be set up under this particular act. The reason we would like this to be done at this time, before April 1, is for us to get out, have the public hearings and then bring it back in so we can pass this for third reading. The people who want to get elected to these district school boards can then register and get on with the election when these school boards take effect next January 1. They are running in the November 1997 election; therefore it's necessary for them to get on with their campaigns, their election finances etc.

That is the timing framework we are operating under here and that is why we believe there is urgency for the passage of this bill in terms of second reading and getting it out for public consultation.

**The Acting Speaker:** Further debate?

**Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands):** Let me say first of all that the longer the deputy House leader spoke about this particular motion, the more he was agreeing with our position that this is a very important piece of legislation. Certainly, it should have had more than three days of debate in the House, and certainly it should have more public hearing time, both here in Toronto and elsewhere, than was originally suggested.

Let me put it quite clearly that we do not agree at all with the closure motion here. We agree with the amendment to the extent that it will allow more time and more input both here and in Toronto, but it doesn't mean at all that we agree with the principle of the closure motion. We think an important piece of legislation that is basically going to change the fundamentals of the school governance we've had in this province since the 1830s, for almost 200 years, is going to be changed in a very dramatic fashion. The main area where it's going to be changed is the fact that the school boards will no longer have any control of the funding that will come into the system.

Let me make it clear that I've gone on record many times in the past as favouring a system whereby the government of Ontario takes over the major funding of the system. But that doesn't mean and it doesn't alter the fact that school boards are going to change. For that kind of change to be truly understood by the people of Ontario, first, there should be adequate consultation with the people of Ontario and, second, there should have been adequate debate time here in the House. Certainly three days isn't going to do it.

As we've already heard, we've heard from at the most two speakers from each party. The kind of consultation time after second reading that was proposed initially by the government House leader certainly isn't going to be enough to satisfy the demand that's out there from the people who want to speak on this bill. This bill is not just about reshaping the boundaries of school boards; it's about something much more fundamental than that. I think the deputy House leader put his finger right on it when he said this is a major piece of legislation. In my opinion, and it's certainly something that's shared by my caucus, a major piece of legislation requires something much more than three days of debate.

There's the other notion as well that somehow all this has to be done by April 1. That is just an artificial time period that the government imposed on itself because it feels that the trustees and also the new municipal councillors who may want to run for election this November have to have a date by which they can register for election so they can start collecting funds etc.

I would say that in about 98% of all the municipalities of Ontario, most of the people who want to run for local office, whether it's as a school board trustee or to a local council, probably won't start declaring themselves until some time this summer and probably won't be doing anything about it by way of actively getting funds or starting a campaign until early in the fall.

There may be the odd area, and undoubtedly the megacity of Toronto that we've been talking about and hearing about at the hearing downstairs is one perfect example, where people will have to get at it a lot sooner, because they're going to be representing such huge districts that will require so much money to mount an effective campaign that they will have to do so well before that.

But there is nothing magical about the date of April 1. There's absolutely no reason why the date May 1 could not have been chosen as the new date for this year that we were aiming towards as far as registration as a



candidate is concerned. I doubt very much whether in most municipalities anything will happen between April 1 and April 30 as far as people declaring themselves for particular positions is concerned. So this whole notion of having to give this bill third reading by April 1 is purely an artificial date that has been put forward by the government and, quite frankly, it doesn't hold any water.

There's also, of course, something else that is troubling about this. There is already an assumption in what was stated by the deputy House leader that this bill will be passed. I realize you've got a majority and you can pass this bill through the kind of closure procedure that we have before us today. You could do it any time you want. But there's this assumption, "We're going to pass this bill," and I'm sure there are people out there who are saying, "Then why should I bother to make a representation to this committee either in Toronto or elsewhere in the province?"

I certainly hope, and I discussed this with members from different caucuses over the last year and a half, that maybe at some point in time we could take another look at the rules and see whether the kind of consultation that we require, particularly on major pieces of legislation like this or on megacity, can take place well before second reading of the bill. It seems to me that we're asking the public to comment on bills when all parties have already taken various positions on the bills.

The kinds of amendments I've seen coming forward to different pieces of legislation here over the last year and a half are usually of a very small, minor and technical nature and really do not do anything to the essence of the bill. If we want to put forward the notion that we're in a democratic society where what people say really matters, then I think we should be much more cognizant of their views before we have in effect staked our positions.

1750

I think the megacity hearings are a real eye-opener not only for the members from Metropolitan Toronto but indeed for the members throughout the province. It is very interesting to see person after person come before the committee and give excellent testimony from different perspectives. These people do not represent different organizations but they all speak from the heart and speak for themselves, and I think it would be an education indeed for all the members to sit in on these hearings.

Just to make absolutely certain of the position that we take in this matter, we do not agree with closure. We agree with the amendment and that any more time that can be allocated for debate and for discussion and for public input, whether it's here in Toronto or elsewhere in the province, we certainly applaud. As a matter of fact, we would like to see much more than even what has been contemplated in the amendment that will be put forward a little bit later on.

This is a major piece of legislation, and I think the people of Ontario should really understand the nature of it. The nature of it is that boards of education, in effect their whole nature, their whole way of operation will completely change. I think personally that is not a good thing. One of the things that has always made our system of government in Ontario, whether it's at the local level or whether it's at the school board level, work extremely well is the kind of governance that we have there.

Should there be changes? No question about it. Should they be the radical changes that this bill in effect imposes on them? I have some serious concerns. We will be voting against this closure motion and we certainly hope that people from around Ontario who will get an opportunity to speak to the committee will take advantage of doing so either here in Toronto or elsewhere in the province.

**The Acting Speaker:** Further debate?

**Mr Wildman:** I must say I am very concerned about the motion that has been put by the government. I think it is inappropriate and I think it is most unfortunate that we have seen the turn of events we have this afternoon.

I think we should understand that Bill 104 is a very important piece of legislation, as my colleague from Kingston and The Islands has just said, and I think it's important for all members of the House and for the public to understand that this bill has not been filibustered, it has not been stalled. Every time the government has called Bill 104 it has been debated. It has been debated for three days and there has been serious debate. This is not a situation where delay tactics have been used to stall this piece of legislation. There is absolutely no excuse for the moving of a time allocation motion at this time.

There are many, many members of the Legislature on all sides who wish to debate this piece of legislation, a piece of legislation that affects boards of education and separate boards right across Ontario, the whole province. It affects rural and urban Ontario. It affects students and parents and trustees right across Ontario. It changes completely the role of trustees in Ontario. It changes the relationship between the provincial government and local boards. It changes the relationship between school staffs and boards and the provincial government.

This is a piece of legislation that mandates the commission to overrule democratically elected boards of education in the province and to administer their affairs. This is a piece of legislation that mandates a commission to find ways of outsourcing non-instructional jobs in education right across Ontario. Thirty-six thousand CUPE jobs are at risk as a result of this, not to save money but simply because of an ideological position taken by this government that we should contract out these kinds of jobs.

I have in my hand here a number of letters, a significantly large number of letters that have been sent to the clerk's office today. These are people in Toronto who wish to express their views on this Bill 104 — just in Toronto, just today, just this afternoon. There are almost 200 letters here.

We know that prior to these letters being submitted, there were over 400 letters and applications and requests. This is without any advertisement by the committee requesting people to come forward to make representations, to make submissions on Bill 104. These are people who are concerned about the education of their children, concerned about local accountability, concerned about how funding for education will be determined in the future and who will have the say and the control over that. Bill 104 is a bill which intends to take control over education away from local authorities and have it concen-



trated in the Ministry of Education and Training, to replace elected officials having accountability with bureaucrats in Toronto advising the minister on how education should be administered across Ontario.

This is a very important piece of legislation. It has not been stalled in this House. The debate, frankly, has only begun, and now we have a time allocation motion that, as set out, would only allow for 10 hours of hearings in Toronto and for four days of travel visiting four communities in the province: a bill that affects the whole province, every community, every school and every student in this province.

Now we have I guess a proposal from the government that they will amend this motion to provide for more hearings, two more days. Two more days are better than four, but they ain't much. We also understand that the amendment may in fact provide for more hours of hearings in Toronto. Well, that's an improvement, but when you're starting from almost nothing, it's not much of an improvement.

We know that there are already almost 700 applications, before we've even advertised for people to come before the committee, 700 people who want to make presentations on Bill 104. Most of those come from Toronto. Once we advertise across the province, there are going to be many, many more. With the time allocation proposed for hearings in this motion and in the proposed amendment, we will not be able to accommodate half of the people who have applied. This government apparently is not willing to listen to people. It's not willing to listen to people's view about a piece of legislation that affects the education of children and will be in place for a good long time, a very long time.

I don't understand how government backbenchers can support this kind of thing, particularly rural backbenchers who are going to see their boards amalgamated with adjacent urban boards and who are going to lose control over the education in the schools in their communities. I don't understand how they can accept this kind of time being allocated. This is purely artificial. There is absolutely no reason why this legislation, in terms of education, has to be in place this fall. We could take more time. We could have the amalgamations of boards and the changes in place after considered debate and hearings, listening to all concerned, and have it in place for the next municipal election. It doesn't have to be in place for this municipal election.

In BC they took three years to do this. Why are we in such a rush? We know why you're in a rush. Because what this is about is taking control over education, taking money out of education. It's about taking another \$1 billion out of education once the Minister of Education and Training gets complete control of funding and expenditures in education in this province.

That \$1 billion has to be collected by this fall because the Treasurer, the Minister of Finance, needs the money in order to finance the income tax scheme that this government is committed to. It doesn't have to do with education. It doesn't have to do with the municipal election. It has everything to do with cutting income taxes for the wealthy at the expense of the education of

our kids, at the expense of listening to people and hearing what their views are about the education of their kids.

I wish the commission that has been set up had been given proper time to do a good job to assist in the amalgamation of boards and the development of a system of education that would serve us well now into the 21st century. We could be doing it with adequate time. Instead, this government is ramming it through.

**The Acting Speaker:** Before I adjourn the House for the day, perhaps you — no? There has been an agreement?

**Hon David Johnson:** There's agreement in terms of an amendment, which I'm happy to put forward in the interests of increased public participation.

The amendment is that the motion be amended by adding the words "and further on those days, that the committee be authorized to meet from 9 am to 12 noon" at the end of the second paragraph; and that the words following the words "March 17, 1997" in the third paragraph be deleted and the words "and Monday, March 24, 1997, and Tuesday, March 25, 1997" be inserted therefor; and that the words "Monday, March 24" in the fourth paragraph be deleted and the words "Wednesday, March 26" be substituted therefor; and that "5 pm" in the second line of the fifth paragraph be replaced by "9 am"; and "21," "Monday" and "24" in the second line be replaced by "26," "Wednesday" and "26."

**The Acting Speaker:** Is it the pleasure of the House that the amendment carry? Carried.

Shall the motion, as amended, be carried?

All those in favour of the motion, please say "aye."

Those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members: a 15-minute bell.

*The division bells rang from 1802 to 1817.*

**The Acting Speaker:** All those in favour of Mr Johnson's motion, as amended, will please rise one at a time.

#### Ayes

Arnott, Ted	Hudak, Tim	Sampson, Rob
Baird, John R.	Jackson, Cameron	Shea, Derwyn
Brown, Jim	Johnson, Bert	Sheehan, Frank
Carr, Gary	Johnson, David	Smith, Bruce
Chudleigh, Ted	Johnson, Ron	Snobelen, John
Clement, Tony	Leach, Al	Spina, Joseph
Cunningham, Dianne	Marland, Margaret	Sterling, Norman W.
Danford, Harry	Martiniuk, Gerry	Stewart, R. Gary
DeFaria, Carl	Maves, Bart	Tascona, Joseph N.
Doyle, Ed	Munro, Julia	Tilson, David
Eves, Ernie L.	Mushinski, Marilyn	Tsubouchi, David H.
Ford, Douglas B.	Newman, Dan	Turnbull, David
Fox, Gary	O'Toole, John	Vankoughnet, Bill
Galt, Doug	Palladini, Al	Villeneuve, Noble
Gilchrist, Steve	Parker, John L.	Wettlaufer, Wayne
Grimmett, Bill	Pettit, Trevor	Witmer, Elizabeth
Hardeman, Ernie	Preston, Peter	Wood, Bob
Hastings, John	Rollins, E.J. Douglas	Young, Terence H.
Hodgson, Chris	Ross, Lillian	

**The Acting Speaker:** All those opposed, please stand one at a time.



**Nays**

Boyd, Marion	Kennedy, Gerard	Phillips, Gerry
Christopherson, David	Kwinter, Monte	Sergio, Mario
Colle, Mike	Lankin, Frances	Silipo, Tony
Cordiano, Joseph	Laughren, Floyd	Wildman, Bud
Crozier, Bruce	Marchese, Rosario	
Gerretsen, John	Martin, Tony	

**Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers):** The ayes are 56; the nays are 16.

**The Acting Speaker:** I declare the motion, as amended, carried.

It being well past 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 1:30 of the clock on Monday.

*The House adjourned at 1821.*



**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO  
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO**

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Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.



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Frances Lankin, Lyn McLeod, Julia Munro, Trevor Pettit,  
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No. 159

N° 159

ISSN 1180-2987

**Legislative Assembly  
of Ontario**

First Session, 36th Parliament

**Assemblée législative  
de l'Ontario**

Première session, 36<sup>e</sup> législature

**Official Report  
of Debates  
(Hansard)**

**Journal  
des débats  
(Hansard)**

**Monday 10 February 1997**

**Lundi 10 février 1997**



**Speaker**  
Honourable Chris Stockwell

**Président**  
L'honorable Chris Stockwell

**Clerk**  
Claude L. DesRosiers

**Greffier**  
Claude L. DesRosiers



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# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 10 February 1997

# ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 10 février 1997

*The House met at 1332.  
Prayers.*

## MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

### OAKS DETOXIFICATION SERVICES

**Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin):** I have a message for the Minister of Health. The people of Elliot Lake, the North Shore, Espanola and Manitoulin do not want the Oaks detox centre closed. A consultant who had never visited Elliot Lake recommended that the Oaks detox centre be closed in his preliminary report on addiction services in the northeast. He did meet with officials, community leaders, clients and former clients 10 days ago.

At a hastily convened public meeting, 200 people came with a message for John Butler. They said: "Don't close the Oaks. The Oaks is only two years old. The Oaks has the only addiction specialist in northeast Ontario. The Oaks has occupancy rates that are extremely high. The Oaks has remarkable outcomes. The Oaks is efficient. The Oaks meets important needs. The Oaks is an integral part of the economic rebirth of Elliot Lake."

Minister, save John Butler and his team of consultants a lot of trouble. Tell him, as I told him, that closing the Oaks treatment centre is nuts. It's just not on.

### CHILD CARE

**Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine):** On many occasions, repeated occasions, I have asked the Minister of Community and Social Services to make clear what her plans are for child care in the province of Ontario.

After the mega-week announcement that municipalities will now have to pick up 50% of the cost of child care, she answered concerns that were raised by myself and others by saying that she was going to make child care mandatory. We have been attempting through repeated questions to get her to define that. What does "mandatory" mean? Is it that the current amount of dollars will be maintained? Is it that the current number of spaces will be maintained and will they be regulated spaces?

Every time I've asked I've been unable to get a clear answer from the minister, but others are getting an answer. Municipal social service departments, who are attending briefings with bureaucrats from the Ministry of Community and Social Services, are being told that "mandatory" is going to mean the same number of spaces that are currently in a municipality, but — and this is a big "but" — they will no longer have to be regulated spaces. They could be moved to informal, unregulated care.

This morning I was joined at a press conference by one parent, Arden, who has three children, who has had three dismal experiences with unregulated care. Despite all of the careful and thorough research that she and her husband did, she had situations where a child was left in diapers all day long and not changed, many of these situations. We have to ensure that this doesn't continue.

### DOMTAR PAPER MILL

**Mr E.J. Douglas Rollins (Quinte):** I rise today to congratulate Domtar's Trenton mill, located in the riding of Quinte, for its successful first year of using the closed-loop system, an environmentally friendly manufacturing system developed by Domtar.

The Trenton mill, one of Domtar's 14 Ontario operations, employs 130 people producing 150,000 tons of corrugated medium paper each year in the manufacturing of corrugated boxes. The mill annually contributes \$19 billion to the local economy.

Besides recycling 240 truckloads of old cardboard containers and scrap paper, the mill is the first integrated pulp and paper mill in North America to successfully implement the 100% closed-loop water system. Instead of discharging water from the manufacturing process into the nearby Trent River, the water is recycled back into the mill. Since the introduction of this closed-loop system just over a year ago, the water discharged back into the Trent system is as clean as the natural river water.

The Trenton mill is an important member of my constituency. The mill creates jobs, stimulates economic development and conducts business in an environmentally responsible way. Congratulations to the Trenton mill and to all the employees who work there for a job well done.

### PROPERTY TAXATION

**Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury):** We in the north have been speaking out for some time now about the unfair treatment of northerners by this government. The recent decision to dump billions of dollars on to the property taxpayers of northern Ontario will cause even more damage to our municipalities due to the extra costs associated with providing services and the smaller tax base.

Recently, the regional municipality of Ottawa-Carleton published a survey outlining the taxation shift on to the property taxpayers of this province. Surprise, surprise. The regional municipality of Sudbury will be hit harder than any other region in the province, according to this survey. There will be an extra \$1,600 required from each householder, residential taxpayer, because of these cuts. This government continues to ignore all pleas and advice from northerners that this dumping will kill northern



municipalities and cause unprecedented property tax increases.

To the Minister of Northern Development and Mines, what is your plan to stop these tax increases? To the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, why are you punishing the north? To the Premier, the man from the north, why are you killing the north?

### HOSPITAL RESTRUCTURING

**Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma):** On Thursday, January 16, in this House I asked the Minister of Health to review the operating plan of the Sault area hospitals which had been previously approved by his predecessor. I pointed out at that time that at Matthews Memorial Hospital in Richards Landing inpatient beds have been closed and the emergency service will be provided by only one nurse on duty at a time. In response, the Minister of Health said that he would review the operating plans and that he was not aware of any closures of inpatient beds.

We've seen over the weekend, tragically, further evidence of the deteriorating situation in health care in the Sault Ste Marie area. We saw a story in the Sault Star which described horrific experiences of an elderly man — and his family — who recently was in the Plummer Memorial Public Hospital in the Sault and unfortunately succumbed after a very difficult time in hospital with what appears to be most inadequate care.

The minister said he was going to review the operating plans of the Sault area hospitals. He said he would do what he could to ensure that there would not be cuts that were unwarranted. I ask him now to look very seriously at the Sault operations and ensure that there are no further cuts to hospital care in Sault Ste Marie.

1340

### EID-UL-FITR

**Mr Jim Brown (Scarborough West):** On Sunday, February 9, the Muslim Canadian community marked the end of the month-long fast of Ramadan with the feast of Eid-Ul-Fitr, or fast-breaking, which lasts for three days. Here in Metro thousands of Muslims attended a ceremony at the CNE grounds to commemorate this important holiday.

The Eid prayer is performed by the whole community at an outdoor prayer called Musala. In honour of the holiday, Muslims don new clothes, children are given presents and candy and everyone visits friends and relatives amid carnival rides, puppet shows and candy vendors.

Eid-Ul-Fitr is also the time when everyone asks pardon for all the wrongs committed by them over the past year.

Muslims of Indonesian and Thai backgrounds call this holiday Lebaran. In Turkey it is called the Candy Festival or Seker Bayrami. In Pakistan the special treat associated with the day is saween, spaghetti cooked in milk and sugar and sprinkled with almonds and dates. In Malaya, where the day is called Hari Raya, Muslims hold open houses and invite their non-Muslim friends to foster more understanding between the different religious groups.

Muslims there will, in turn, visit the Chinese during lunar new year, the Hindus during Dewali and the Christians during Christmas.

The Muslims of Ontario truly set an admirable example in multicultural understanding and tolerance that we in Canada would do well to imitate. On behalf of the Ontario government, I wish all members of the Muslim Canadian community a happy and much-deserved feast of fast-breaking. Salaam Alaikum.

### SCHOOL BOARDS

**Mr Frank Miclash (Kenora):** My statement today is in the form of an editorial that appeared in the Red Lake District News. I'm sure that if backbench members of the government were allowed, they too would be able to read to the House similar editorials which are appearing in their local newspapers.

"In typical autocratic fashion, which has become the hallmark of this current government, Minister of Education John Snobelen dropped the hammer on school boards.

"Basically, his recent announcement has relegated the governance of all schools west of Thunder Bay to one mega-board. So much for local solutions to local problems.

"The notion that serious savings can be realized by virtue of this move is tenuous at best. A centralized approach to delivery of educational services is a grinding bureaucracy waiting to happen.

"This announcement goes well beyond the Sweeney report on the reduction of school boards and well beyond the model that reasonable educators have presented to the government. If what the minister wanted was to hit educational stakeholders in a shock-troop-like manner, then he has succeeded. He is, however, gambling with the future of the young people of this province.

"This government is fond of saying that they have a mandate for change. This government did indeed get elected to bring about change. It did not get elected to slaughter a system that has taken 150 years to build.

"The minister's autocratic style of bringing about change may wash with his boss. However, he gets a failing grade around here."

### PROPERTY TAXATION

**Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre):** I rise today in an unusual circumstance. I find myself, thanks to the Tories — the only thing they've ever really achieved of any significance, in my opinion, is that I stand here today agreeing with the editorial board of the Hamilton Spectator and my Liberal colleague from Sudbury, who today talked about the downloading effects of your major changes.

The member for Sudbury talked about the fact that his community was hardest hit in a survey, and the results in Hamilton-Wentworth show the same thing. But it also shows that Hamilton-Wentworth, my community, is the second-hardest-hit community in this province to the tune of \$121 million that we lose because of the downloading of this government. That's an 18% increase on the



property tax base of people in the Hamilton-Wentworth area, an unacceptable increase in property tax directly attributable to your actions.

Further to that, we aren't yet focusing on the fact that the items being downloaded on to municipalities are those that have the greatest increase in the future: non-profit housing costs and maintenance of infrastructure are now going to be downloaded on to municipalities; community health care, as our population ages; homes for the aged and other kinds of care for seniors are being downloaded. What about the fact that you haven't said anything about not only guaranteeing the current loss but the future losses?

At the end of the day, isn't this idea of a fund really just reintegration of something they said they just finished separating —

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Thank you.

### MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

**Mr Dan Newman (Scarborough Centre):** I rise today as the member for Scarborough Centre to inform the Legislature that constituents in my riding are calling my office and talking about the huge waste of taxpayers' dollars that the city of Toronto is spending on Bill 103.

The city of Toronto is spending \$1.6 million on propaganda and a mail-in vote on the same subject. That \$1.6 million includes \$955,000 for a mail-in vote —

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Order. Stop the clock, please.

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker:** It's not. Member?

**Mr Newman:** I was told when I was first elected that if I was heckled, that meant I was delivering an effective speech, so I thank the members opposite for their compliments.

Some \$955,000 for a mail-in vote; \$670,000 for an advertising campaign against Bill 103; \$50,000 for citizens' grants — these grants only go to people who support the one-sided position of the city of Toronto; \$20,000 to a group called Taxpayers Against Megacity. This is very ironic, because real taxpayers' groups do not use government handouts that come from taxpayers in the first place. The list goes on: \$3,000 for a union coalition to demonstrate against Bill 103; \$4,000 for a street theatre group to perform a tug of war depicting the fight between six local municipalities and one unified city; \$3,000 to the Metro Toronto Coalition for Better Child Care; \$4,500 to Young Citizens for Local Democracy; \$3,000 to Toronto Artists for Local Democracy; a \$3,000 grant to the Labour Council of Metropolitan Toronto and York Region, partnered with the Network for Social Justice from the Days of Action.

**Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines):** Mr Speaker, I'd like to request unanimous consent that the previous member be permitted an additional 30 seconds to list all the money that his government is now spending on self-serving advertising on television.

**The Speaker:** Is there unanimous consent to allow the member another 30 seconds? I heard one or two noes.

### SPEAKER'S RULING

**Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma):** On a point of privilege, Mr Speaker: I rise to make you aware, if you are not already aware, of an incident which took place in this chamber last Thursday, February 6, which has caused grave concern to all members who care about their rights and privileges as members of the assembly.

Speaker, you will know that the member for London Centre rose on a point of order, but the occupant of the chair did not recognize the member and chose to call for another order. It is difficult to have confidence in the Chair when rulings are made which directly contradict previous rulings, parliamentary precedent and our standing orders.

If the Chair had ruled that the member was not entitled to raise her legitimate point of order at that time, we need to know when she would be in order to raise it. We also need to know if the member for London Centre is permanently disqualified from raising points of order and bringing them to the attention of the Speaker, as is called for in parliamentary precedent and in the standing orders.

In our view, the occupant of the chair conducted himself in a way contrary to parliamentary precedent, our standing orders and rulings that have been made by you, Speaker. Please allow me to explain.

On January 16, 1997, my colleague the member for London Centre rose on a point of order to bring to your attention a violation of the standing orders. As you know, standing order 97 provides all members of the assembly with the right to ask written questions of government ministries. The standing order reads, in part, "The minister shall answer such written questions within 14 calendar days unless he or she indicates that more time is required because the answer will be costly or time-consuming." The member for London Centre submitted a number of questions to the Attorney General on May 6 of last year. It has been more than 14 days since those questions appeared on the order paper.

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On January 16, the government House leader sought your intervention to prevent members of my caucus from bringing these violations of the standing orders to your attention. You refused to grant the government House leader's request. You said, in part, to the government House leader:

"To the House leader, the difficulty that I as Speaker have is that all these points of order they're raising are in fact legitimate and in order. Now, I appreciate the fact that there's a process taking place here, and I understand what's going on. If they were standing in their place on improper points of order or simply adjourning and ringing the bells, I may have a leg to stand on with respect to this particular reading in Beauchesne, but quite frankly I have not ruled a single point of order out of order yet. Every one of them has been factual, it's been in order and I've had to deal with it as an orderly approach."

Before I refer specifically to what happened last Thursday, I would like to cite one more authority. The 6th edition of Beauchesne's Parliamentary Rules and Forms defines a point of order as:



"Questions raised with the view of calling attention to any departure from the standing orders or the customary modes of proceeding in debate or in the conduct of legislative business and may be raised at virtually any time...whether that member has previously spoken or not."

It then goes on to describe when a point of order can be raised:

"Any member is entitled, even bound, to bring to the Speaker's immediate notice any instance of a breach of order. The member may interrupt and lay the point in question concisely before the Speaker. This should be done as soon as an irregularity is perceived in the proceedings which are engaging the attention of the House. The Speaker's attention must be directed to a breach of order at the proper moment, namely the moment it occurred." I repeat, "The Speaker's attention must be directed to a breach of order at the proper moment, namely the moment it occurred."

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** I'm having a great deal of difficulty hearing the point of order. I understand that there are some conversations. If you could take them to the lobbies outside, I'd appreciate it.

**Mr Wildman:** On page 6806 of Hansard, you will find the record of what happened last Thursday afternoon when my colleague the member for London Centre was quite deliberately not recognized on a point of order. The occupant of the chair would not know this, but the member for London Centre was rising to bring to the attention of the House an order paper question that was about 200 days overdue. I remind you, Speaker, that you characterized this point of order about three weeks ago as factual and in order. For some reason, the occupant of your chair refused to recognize the member for London Centre. In fact, he addressed her plea to the Chair's attention by saying, "There is nothing out of order." One wonders how he would know that.

It is difficult for us and for any members of the House to have confidence in the Chair when rulings are made which directly contradict previous rulings, parliamentary precedent and our standing orders. If the Chair ruled that a member was not entitled to raise her legitimate point of order at that time, then when could she raise it?

I ask you to review the situation and ensure that in future all occupants of the chair in this assembly follow precedent, follow the standing orders and rulings that have been made previously and not follow the sorry example we saw last Thursday afternoon.

**The Speaker:** On the same point of privilege? The government House leader.

**Hon David Johnson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Minister of Health, Government House Leader):** Mr Speaker, in terms of the events being portrayed by the House leader of the third party, there is a highly different submission I would make to you on the course of events. My recollection is that during the course of petitions, I believe it was the official opposition that called for the adjournment of the House. There had been 30 minutes of, frankly, wasted time of this Legislature waiting for those bells. We then came back after the vote and over the next short period of time the rotation naturally fell to the government party.

The Speaker at that time, it is my recollection, recognized the member for York Mills. The member for York Mills had stood in his place and begun to indicate that the government was moving to go to orders of the day when one of the members opposite stood at the same time as the member for York Mills had gained the floor and started his motion. As a result — I will say that the member for York Mills was very swift on his feet, as he always is — it is my recollection that the member for York Mills had the floor and was beginning in terms of a motion.

The Speaker at that time allowed the member for York Mills to complete his motion. Indeed, I don't think the Speaker would have any knowledge of what the point of privilege was or what the point of order was. Notwithstanding that 99% of the points of privilege and points of order are simply to delay this House, I don't think he would have that sort of knowledge. But the member for York Mills had the floor, made his motion and the House carried on dutifully in that regard.

**The Speaker:** Much the same as committee Chairs, Deputy Speakers are in the same situation. I don't think you would expect nor would it be helpful if the Speaker started questioning rulings that were taken at committee level or when other occupants were in the chair. It wouldn't be particularly appropriate for a couple of reasons. First, I was not here at the time that this incident took place. I don't think the members would want the same restrictions placed upon Chairs of committees, for the simple reason it would be impossible to accomplish anything at committee or in this Legislature if you could appeal all decisions to the Speaker.

Those are the people who have been put in place, they're members of this House as well, and I think they have equally as honourable a process and ideas to ensure that this place runs as it should. I can't begin to start questioning how the member ruled and whether or not the member for London Centre was up before the member for York Mills, and I don't think I want to get into that. Beyond that I can only say that at the time you feel these particular orders are out of order, you should rise at that time, if the privileges, in your own opinion, have been trammelled in any way.

So I will not take the member for Algoma's point of privilege. I would caution again: At the time you have to raise it, however the Speaker of that moment rules will be my standing, and I would not want to begin to second-question any of those people who are in the chair at the time.

I want to go to the chief government whip.

#### VISITORS

**Mr David Turnbull (York Mills):** On a different point of order, Mr Speaker: I would like to point out that in the opposition members' gallery we have a group of students from the Berzsenyi Dániel Gimnázium from Budapest visiting us, and I'm sure you would want to recognize that.

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** To the chief government whip, thank you very much, and welcome. You will see full well what I mean because that wasn't in order, either.



1400

## USE OF GOVERNMENT FACILITIES

**Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma):** On another point of privilege, Mr Speaker: This relates to when you were in the chair. Last Thursday, as you'll recall, I rose on a point of privilege on the assertion that the Progressive Conservative caucus operation was printing PC party advertising at public expense.

You replied to my point of privilege at that time by saying in part: "I don't think the members of this House want the Speaker to get involved in investigating this process, because this brochure was found in a recycling bin. With all due respect, it's not something I think the Speaker is going to have any success in reviewing and, secondly, I don't think has the wherewithal to in fact do just that." You went on to say, "If this brochure were sent out or you could bring in some evidence that it was printed at a certain spot or paid for by a specific account that it shouldn't have been, I would be happy to review it."

Speaker, you may have seen in Friday's media reports on this issue that the Minister of Finance admitted that the Progressive Conservative Party material was printed at public expense. He was quoted as saying: "There is no doubt somebody did not make the appropriate decision. The PC party will be billed."

On January 22, the Minister of Municipal Affairs apologized to the Legislature for disseminating information which, in your words, "convey the impression that the passage of the requisite legislation was not necessary or was a foregone conclusion." That is why you ruled that a prima facie case of contempt of this Legislature had been established. The minister waited six weeks to apologize, and only after the Speaker had ruled on the matter.

We have also seen evidence of material printed by the government caucus and faxed out anonymously under the pretence of being third-party, non-partisan material. Recipients of the faxed material learned the source of this information only after we raised the matter in the House.

In this case the announcement by the Minister of Finance that the Progressive Conservative Party would compensate the taxpayers for this betrayal of trust is welcome news. However, our caucus wonders why such admissions and apologies always follow and never precede the opposition raising these matters in the Legislature.

In the 6th edition of Beauchesne's Parliamentary Rules and Forms you will find the following reference: "Recognized parties within the meaning of the Parliament of Canada Act are allocated, on a proportionate basis, funds for establishing and maintaining research groups to aid them in their parliamentary work." In this assembly the convention has been that caucuses, or cauci, may also use their allocated funds for the purpose of communications. But it always has been made clear to all parties in this assembly that although the content of these communications may be and must be political in nature, those budgets are used to assist members of the Legislature "in their parliamentary work."

The distinction is clear: We can use taxpayers' money to communicate with our constituents and with all of the people of Ontario but we cannot use taxpayers' money to subsidize political parties and their activities.

I don't think it's reasonable to ask members of the Legislature to simply put this matter behind them. We now know that the Tory caucus has printed partisan advertising at public expense. This was discovered by accident. I wish I could give assurances to my constituents that this is an aberration, that the Tories actually got caught the first time they used taxpayers' dollars for party advertising. Unfortunately, I can't give them this assurance with any confidence.

That is why I am turning to you, Speaker, to seek your intervention in this matter. Surely there must be a better way of ensuring taxpayers' dollars are spent properly and not used to print partisan material. Is getting caught the only punishment and the only way we can possibly find out about the misuse of taxpayers' dollars?

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** I appreciate that information and I will reserve on that particular ruling. I hope to be ruling on a series of issues later in the week and I will try and deal with them in a package, if that's preferable.

## ORAL QUESTIONS

## UNIVERSITY FINANCING

**Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition):** My question is for the Minister of Education. FastLane Technologies is a high-tech company based in Ottawa-Carleton which shows great promise. Unfortunately, a couple of weeks ago FastLane decided to move almost all of its operations, including its headquarters, from Ottawa to Halifax, and the reason it provided for making such a move was because it was unable to find people with the necessary skills here in Ontario.

It seems to me we should be doing everything we can in Ontario to ensure that we are meeting the high-tech job gap. What I want to ask of you is, tell me how your huge cuts to post-secondary education and how your tuition fee increases are helping to fill Ontario's high-tech job gap?

**Hon John Snobelen (Minister of Education and Training):** I can explain, and I'm glad to explain to the Leader of the Opposition what's been happening in the post-secondary community. We commissioned a report, the Smith report, that will help us, I believe, have some public policy to direct our post-secondary education system.

We are acting on those recommendations now. In fact, I was able to announce before Christmas that we would have stable funding for our university and college community. We are pushing the federal government now to help us in this next budget to have an income-contingent loans package that will help our students attend universities and have excellent programming. In addition to the Ontario student trust fund and various other instruments this government has put forward over the last two years, I believe that will help us build a more vibrant post-secondary sector.



**Mr McGuinty:** I wish FastLane Technologies was alone in this regard, but it's not. Northern Telecom, Newbridge, Cognos, Mitel, Jetform, Lumonics and Corel, all very promising high-tech companies, have all had to expand outside of Ontario because they can't find the necessary skill sets here. They haven't got students going through programs that will provide those students with the necessary skills to take those jobs. In fact, there are currently somewhere between 2,000 and 3,000 jobs going begging in Ottawa-Carleton alone in a high-tech sector. Maybe the greatest tragedy of all here is that for every one of those jobs we fill, we create three or four spinoffs, primarily for people who know nothing about high technology.

Last year 44 out of 50 American states increased funding to their publicly funded universities. You know what we did? You know what we did to get ready for the 21st century? We cut funding to our universities by \$400 million. Do you realize that your failure to take an active and key and vital interest in education is costing Ontario good-paying jobs?

**Hon Mr Snobelen:** We recognize the connection between the investment in education and future payoffs in terms of the economy of Ontario, and that is why we commissioned a group of people to look at this sector, and we have taken their advice to make sure that our investments in that sector do realize a better Ontario and better opportunities in Ontario.

I hesitate to correct the Leader of the Opposition, but I attended a function, as a matter of fact, last week where NorTel helped make an investment in the University of Toronto, which they say, matched with the student trust fund this government put forward last year, will help to build a better capacity in that university, one of the finest in Canada.

I believe there is room for improvement certainly in the post-secondary sector. I believe the government needs to move to make investments that are rational and logical and based on study, and that is why we are out there now reviewing Ontario's investment in research in our universities so that we can make those sound investments in the future.

**Mr McGuinty:** There's no doubt that the private sector is playing an active role in helping to meet the specialty they have, but I believe, and you ought to believe, that government has a complementary role to play in that regard. You can't wash your hands of this. Get in there. Ask them how you might help.

We're getting ready for the 21st century, and anybody who understands anything about these things knows that if you want to succeed in a knowledge-based economy you have got to invest in your people. We're going to get by in the 21st century in Ontario on brain power. You've got to invest in people, and that starts from junior kindergarten all the way through to post-secondary. You're not doing that. You're failing our kids and that means you're failing the province.

How many more jobs are going to leave this province before you realize that lower personal income taxes are not what's really going to give us our competitive edge here? What's going to be a skilled workforce. When are you going to realize that?

**Hon Mr Snobelen:** I believe the approach of this government has been one of balance, of reason, of looking at the future of this province and making sure we can build to it, and making sure of two things: first, that we have the excellent programs in post-secondary that will get students the kind of skills that are needed by businesses here in Ontario now and in the future; but second, to make sure that when students leave those institutions they have a career and a job to go to.

That's why we reversed your government's record of increasing taxes, including payroll taxes, which drove jobs out of this province at an unprecedented level. I find it objectionable, sir, that you would stand up in this House and suggest that was not the case and that we have not reversed that. We have job growth in this province for the first time in over a decade.

1410

### HOSPITAL FINANCING

**Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition):** My question is for the Minister of Health. You may have had the opportunity to read a very disturbing account of the treatment received by a patient in an Ontario hospital, the Plummer hospital in Sault Ste Marie. This account was written by the patient's son. It tells a story of a tragedy that befell the father while a patient in an Ontario hospital. I want to quote for you one of the paragraphs.

The son wrote, when he first visited the hospital — he lives here in Toronto — "I was shocked by the general griminess of this hospital environment. My mother and I often found soiled diapers left discarded on the floor by my father's bed and unwashed urinals left on the same side table that was used for the food tray and medications. I was also alarmed by lapses in his basic care like not getting fed when neither my mother nor I were there to do it."

Minister, do you still maintain that your hospital cuts have not affected patient care in Ontario?

**Hon David Johnson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Minister of Health, Government House Leader):** The objective of the funding program we have set out with hospitals and the objective of the associated reinvestment program that goes along with it — and the reinvestment program to this point involves some \$800 million worth of funding into health care in the province of Ontario; reinvestments in kidney dialysis, cancer, cardiac care — are there to make the services better. Most of those involved in the hospital field have clearly indicated that restructuring is necessary because the previous two governments, over the course of some 10 years, closed some 8,500 hospital beds, but the infrastructure, the heating and the electricity, is still there, consequently our resources are not being effectively used.

If your question is, am I satisfied that we're finished the restructuring, that more improvements are needed, I am certainly not satisfied. More improvements are needed, and those reinvestments will come in the next few weeks.

**Mr McGuinty:** Minister, your cuts are hurting people. Let me read a bit more of this for you. The author, the son, tells of a time when he was unable to get to the



hospital, being based here in Toronto, so he had a friend visit the room. and he writes as follows:

"When she entered his room before lunch, it did not appear that much nursing had been conducted there yet. It was dark because the blinds were still closed. My father's IV stand was knocked over. He had not been shaved. His mouth was parched and his lips were cracked. A food tray arrived without any beverage. For the next two hours no nurse entered the room, nor did any staff come to feed him."

Minister, you cut, last year, \$2.9 million out of the Plummer hospital budget. My question is quite simply this: How many more people in Ontario are going to have to suffer in our hospitals, not because of their illness but because of your cuts before you realize that your cuts are hurting people?

**Hon David Johnson:** I visited a hospital in Hamilton yesterday and I would give full credit to the staff of this hospital in Hamilton, that from what I could see, the staff were providing first-class treatment. I think if you talk to the people in the hospitals in Ontario they will say they face a challenge, as we all do, as municipalities do, as the province does, as all aspects of public administration face, but that they are coping.

It's been my experience visiting the hospital yesterday, visiting the Mississauga Hospital a week before, that indeed the people of Ontario are getting excellent service. But should that service be improved? Should there be more reinvestment? Absolutely, there should be more reinvestment, and that's what this government intends to do. This government is taking the money out, associated with administration, associated with technological advances, and reinvesting that money back so we'll have better services for the people of Ontario in the future.

**Mr McGuinty:** That is not happening. The author makes it perfectly clear that the cause of the difficulties his father faced was that there was not enough nursing care. It's as simple as that.

One final quote from this article. This is a man writing about his father in hospital:

"Seventy-three days after his admission to the Plummer, my father died with a severe rash around his crotch, his flesh raw and open from his being left too long in soiled diapers so many times. He had screamed in agony when being wiped during his last weekend."

That is unacceptable in Ontario in 1997. On behalf of patients found in Ontario hospitals today and those yet to be found there and their families, Minister, will you stop the cuts?

**Hon David Johnson:** Individual cases are a source of concern and worry. We are all very concerned about individual cases. I certainly will be talking to the Ministry of Health staff in conjunction with this one particular case. But I will reiterate, and I hope this is an objective shared by all the members of this House, that what we need to do is look at where the services are needed: Where are the chronic care services needed? Where are the cardiac care services needed? That's what the Ministry of Health is attempting to do.

All of these individual cases are a source of worry. The government has a difficult chore in terms of the \$2 billion in reduced funding from the federal government,

but I can assure you that we are working with the hospital community to improve services for all the people. We are reinvesting over \$800 million to date.

#### MINISTER OF MUNICIPAL AFFAIRS AND HOUSING

**Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River):** My question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. The Minister of Municipal Affairs has made a lot of statements lately about how municipalities should be cutting their costs. He has said that all municipalities should be cutting their budgets by 5% or 6% with little difficulty. He's also said that councillors and reeves and mayors cost too much and that they should be gotten rid of.

We understand that the Minister of Municipal Affairs, from his disclosure statement, and I've got a copy of it here, receives a salary, as an MPP and as a cabinet minister, of \$111,000 a year. As well he receives a pension of about \$60,000 a year from the Toronto Transit Commission — that's the public purse, those are taxpayers — and a significant pension from GO Transit. In other words, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing is triple-dipping at the public trough, triple-dipping from taxpayers to the tune of about \$200,000 a year.

Minister, can you tell us how you justify telling municipalities to cut, cut, cut while you triple-dip to the tune of \$200,000 a year?

1420

**Hon Al Leach (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing):** What the member opposite has stated is correct: I did work 33 years with the province of Ontario, I did work 10 years with the TTC and, yes, I contributed to and receive pensions from both of those, pensions received by every other employee who worked the same length of time.

What that has to do with municipalities dealing with their budgets, trying to work efficiently and trying to get rid of waste and duplication, is a mystery to me. It's just more mud-raking by this guy across the hall.

**Mr Hampton:** It has a lot to do with it, that after someone has been to the bank and has taken most of the money out of the bank, they then start telling everyone else in the province that they should tighten their belts.

Minister, we also understand that in addition to your triple-dipping from taxpayers, triple-dipping at the public trough, you continue to receive \$11,500 a year in salary from the Toronto Transit Commission. I wonder if you can tell us how it is that on the one hand your government says Wheel-Trans for the disabled must be cut and that transit across the board in the province must be cut, while you can still receive \$11,500 a year in salary from the Toronto Transit Commission. Can you explain that?

**Hon Mr Leach:** To answer that very — no, that wouldn't be parliamentary, but I'm thinking it — question, I worked for those pensions and I get the same pension that every other employee who worked under the same conditions, years of service, worked. What that has to do with municipalities working efficiently and trying to eliminate waste and duplication, as I said, is absolutely irrelevant.



**Mr Hampton:** I did not hear an answer to the question. What we know is that the Toronto Transit Commission, because of this government's cuts, is being forced to cut Wheel-Trans for the disabled, and we have all kinds of disabled people in this city and elsewhere in the province who can't get transit. We also know that services generally have been cut in terms of public transportation, yet this minister continues to receive \$11,500 a year from the Toronto Transit Commission. We'd like an explanation.

Minister, while you're at it, we understand that this payment system for senior managers was set up with the Toronto Transit Commission while you were the general manager. In other words, you're the one who put it in place. I'm going to ask you for an explanation again.

You stand on your feet and you tell municipal officials to cut, cut, cut all across the province. You stand there and tell them that the disabled don't matter and that Wheel-Trans can be cut. You're triple-dipping at the public trough. You're drawing at least \$200,000 a year out of the public purse and \$11,500 in salary still from the Toronto Transit Commission. We're asking for an explanation of how that can be.

**Hon Mr Leach:** The comments that were just made by the leader of the third party are not correct. I did not institute that program. It's a program that's been there for senior officials of the TTC for as long as I know. It's also no different from the program that applies to senior officials in the OMERS pension plan.

Again, what employees' pensions have to do with the delivery of services by a municipality or an agency of that municipality — it's totally irrelevant. We contributed to that pension plan, just as former members of this Legislature contributed to a pension plan. They're entitled to their pension under those circumstances, as I am.

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** New question. Leader of the third party.

**Mr Hampton:** I don't believe we even yet have heard an answer from the Minister of Municipal Affairs about why he still receives a salary from the Toronto Transit Commission while they're cutting Wheel-Trans services.

#### GREAT LAKES WATER QUALITY

**Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River):** My next question is for the Minister of Environment. Today a group called Great Lakes United presented an alarming report about what is happening to the quality and quantity of the water in the Great Lakes. The report warns of the risk of permanently lowered lake levels causing significant harm to the environment, to recreational activities and to our economy.

This makes it all the more shocking to learn today that the Harris government, your government, has cancelled funding for the bodies developing cleanup plans for 16 water pollution hot spots in the Great Lakes. The reason given for violating an agreement Ontario signed in 1994 is that the ministry can't afford it.

The Deputy Premier in the Harris government is also the Minister of Finance, and he is responsible for slashing \$200 million from the environment ministry budget. Day after day we keep hearing about environmental damage.

What will it take to get this government to change its course?

**Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Environment and Energy):** This government is living up to a commitment of a tremendous commitment to the environment, to continuing to clean up the Great Lakes. We are, as the RAP program progresses, the remedial action program to clean up the 17 different sites in Ontario, shifting our resources, shifting the way we spend money so we get greater impact for the dollars we are spending.

These are tough times. We were left with a tremendous debt by the leader of the third party's party. Quite frankly, he's left us in a very difficult position to deal with issues like cleaning up the Great Lakes. If in fact he had left us in a much better financial position, we would have been able to attack these problems even more aggressively than we are. Having said that, what we're doing is doing the best we can with the dollars he left us. Quite frankly, we're doing a hell of a lot better than he did in the past.

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Supplementary, the member for Riverdale.

**Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale):** Minister, haven't you ever heard of an environmental deficit? It's going to be generations down the road that will be paying for your phoney tax cut of today. Since this government was elected, your cuts to conservation programs, your abandonment of responsibility for water and sewage systems in Bill 107 and your privatization agenda will all threaten to make the situation in the Great Lakes worse.

The Deputy Premier should be interested in this. The mayor of Parry Sound was there today in support of this report. Listen to what was said in this report today: "Decreased lake levels could change beaches and shorelines and would leave docks and shipping and boat accesses above the water line. This would decrease shorefront property values. Recreational activities such as boating, fishing and hunting may also be negatively affected."

Minister, even if you don't care about the environment, will you consider the impacts on property values, tourism and the economy and stop these drastic cuts to the environment now?

**Hon Mr Sterling:** I am of course concerned about any environmental damage which occurs to the province of Ontario, to our beautiful lakes and our rivers and our land. Notwithstanding that, you should know that this government and previous governments over the past 10 years have put some \$300 million towards remedial actions in the Great Lakes, a joint agreement between the federal government and the provincial government. Our federal government hasn't been quite so forthcoming with regard to its share on this. We are looking to them to show a little leadership for a change and increase their \$75 million into the area which we as provincial taxpayers have put forward to cleaning up our Great Lakes.

We are concerned. We are taking some actions which have been left for want for a number of years. It is a difficult time, as I mentioned before. The member for Riverdale knows that she left us in a very, very deep hole, and we're trying to dig our way out of it. We're going to deal with these problems as they come on, and we're going to deal with them in an erstwhile manner.



1430

**Ms Churley:** Minister, I don't think you even know about the report that was released today, and I suggest you read it. This government's reckless slashing in the name of this phoney tax scheme, which you neglect to mention, has decimated the monitoring, research and enforcement staff of your ministry.

You have no water conservation strategy. You're dumping responsibility for water and sewage treatment on the municipalities — we're debating that bill now — and you're encouraging privatization. You've even abandoned protection for agricultural land near the Rouge Valley Park. Now the environment ministry is breaking Ontario's agreements to clean up pollution in the Great Lakes. That is what you're doing, because the ministry says it simply no longer has the money for cleanup.

Do you think the people of Ontario really believe that industry is going to clean up these lakes all on its own? That's why the IJC suggested that these stakeholder groups be put together in the first place. You should be supporting them. Tell me today that you will reinstate that funding.

**Hon Mr Sterling:** We support these groups. Some of these groups have done some tremendous work in planning the particular actions with regard to RAP. We are looking for contributions from communities, some from the province, some from our federal government, with regard to putting forward the necessary funding support for these groups.

We believe that everybody should be involved in this. This is a joint problem. This is a problem with regard to the federal government, this is a problem with regard to the provincial government and this is a problem with regard to the municipal government. We think they should all be involved in the solution. That's what we are saying.

We are saying that the private sector can be involved in this as well, but we are not for a moment abandoning our responsibility. We will continue to fund where necessary, but we are looking for better deals, we are looking for better ways to clean up than in the past and we are also looking for our federal cousins to come forward with their fair share as well.

**Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East):** My question is to the Minister of the Environment as well. You're great at talking the talk but you're pretty lousy at walking the walk when it comes to your commitment on the environment. You talk about your commitment at the same time that you proceed to slash almost one third of your staff. You talk about your commitment at the same time that you continue to deregulate every aspect of your ministry.

We find today that you have decided that the advisory bodies that work with you and do the job you should be doing and work well in the communities don't deserve any provincial funding. You're reducing this to what has become bake-sale environmentalism and you hope that these groups can go out, bake some muffins, maybe stand on the street corner and sell them and then fund their activities.

Can you tell me how the strategy and the plan to cut the funding for the advisory groups fits into your commitment and your plans to clean up the Great Lakes hot spots?

**Hon Mr Sterling:** I'd be glad to. There are really three stages with regard to RAP, the remedial action program. The first part is recognizing the problems. The second part is putting forward your plans. Quite frankly, of the 17 areas in the province of Ontario, I believe in 14 or 15 of them we are past that advisory stage where the great input with regard to those particular municipalities was needed. The stage of the progress towards addressing the problems has changed and therefore the needs in the process have changed and we are readjusting to those changes in those needs.

**Mr Agostino:** There's more pollution coming out of that answer than there has been out of the smokestacks in this province. Very clearly, the plans are in place, as you claim. What you now have done is cut off at the knees the groups that have worked with you, with your ministry, to put these plans in place, in order to take away their ability to monitor what you're doing, to take away their ability to follow up and make sure your commitment is followed by some dollars and some real action rather than the rhetoric that continues to come out of you as you, step by step, dismantle the environment and the ministry across this province.

What you're doing is taking away a group that was going to be there to look after and ensure that the commitments you make are followed through. That is what you've done all along. You've gotten rid of environmental regulations; you've gotten rid of monitoring stations; you now are getting rid of advisory groups. Very clearly, it's see no evil, hear no evil, speak no evil. "If no one's there to criticize us, if no one's there to point that out, then the problem is solved."

Can you outline specifically for the House today what your government's commitment is in 1997 for the cleanup of the environmental hot spots in this province and what the —

**The Speaker:** Thank you. Member for Hamilton East, come to order, please.

**Hon Mr Sterling:** As I said before, we have many projects which we're dealing with across the province in terms of this particular area. I want to tell the member from Hamilton that last week I signed a letter to commit \$1 million to clean up Hamilton harbour, which neither that government nor your government dealt with in the past.

That's the kind of commitment this government is making. We're not only dealing with groups that talk and advise; we're dealing with the real part of the program, and that's cleaning up the mess that was left there by previous generations and previous governments.

**Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines):** Can't just make up the answers.

**The Speaker:** Member for St Catharines, come to order.

## HOSPITAL FINANCING

**Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma):** I have a question of the Minister of Health. I want to ensure that he understands that the incident raised by the Leader of the Opposition in this House today is not an individual case, as he put it, an isolated incident. To have a story in the newspaper



headlined "The War Zone" in describing a hospital stay is alarming enough.

The minister should know that my colleague the member for Sault Ste Marie and I, as well as others, have received many complaints about the effects of cuts on the Sault area hospitals, specifically the Plummer Memorial Public Hospital, and that these are not individual, isolated cases.

On January 16 in this House, I asked the minister if he would review the operating plan for 1996-97 which had been approved for the Sault area hospitals by his predecessor. The minister said he would review the plan. Will the minister assure us that he has reviewed the situation and that he will not allow —

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Thank you, member for Algoma.

**Hon David Johnson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Minister of Health, Government House Leader):** What I will assure the member opposite is that this hospital's operating plan and all hospitals' operating plans will be reviewed by their local district health councils first. That is the process. Then the operating plans come to the Ministry of Health, and the Ministry of Health will review all of these plans. This is part of a process leading up to the budget for 1997-98. That is the process. It's a good process and there will be a thorough review.

I would also say — I think it has to be said and I've been in a few hospitals lately — that we have so many good people working in our hospitals: the nurses, the doctors, all of the staff. I must say they are giving an excellent level of care to the people of Ontario. They are hardworking and they are performing an excellent service for the people of Ontario.

Sometimes when complaints come forward there may be a point of view that their services are not being appreciated. Well, they are performing well and we intend to reinvest in the services the people need to support their work.

1440

**The Speaker:** Supplementary, member for Sault Ste Marie.

**Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie):** Minister, let me be more precise as to the impact of your health care cuts to services in my community. This weekend's article in the Sault Star paints a terrible picture that is becoming all too familiar. Mauno Kaihla died in uncalled-for discomfort, not unlike Eric Snoddon. His family detailed his ordeal in the October 9 issue of the Sault Star. These devastating stories are directly linked to the cuts your government is imposing on hospitals and health care across this province.

Will you call the Sault Ste Marie hospital today and tell them there will be no more cuts, that they should immediately review the events leading up to the conditions found in these two of so many incidents and that you will fund any necessary changes?

**Hon David Johnson:** The operating budget of the Sault Ste Marie hospital was approved in last year's budget, 1996-97, conditionally, by the province of Ontario. The ministry is monitoring, the district health council is monitoring to ensure that service is maintained.

Again I will say that hospitals are performing an excellent level of care across the province. I hope the impression is not conveyed by the members opposite that our hospitals are wanting. They're performing well.

I will reiterate once again that it is this ministry's and this government's intent to support their efforts by reinvesting back into the services that patients need. Hospitals are reacting by reducing administration — some hospitals have reduced administration, some hospitals have reduced general managers — taking away from the administrative services, providing services directly to patients.

**The Speaker:** New question, the member for Scarborough Centre.

**Mr Martin:** Mr Speaker, on a point of personal privilege: I'm just beside myself today, actually heartsick over this, and I suggest to you we on this side of the House come to this place week after week asking very sincere questions to be helpful to our constituents. I wonder how long you plan to allow the government to get up and to obfuscate and to avoid and to lie to us.

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker:** Order. I have to ask you to withdraw the comment you made, please.

**Mr Martin:** Mr Speaker, in all good conscience I cannot withdraw that comment.

**The Speaker:** Then I name the member for Sault Ste Marie.

*Mr Martin was escorted from the chamber.*

## FISCAL AND ECONOMIC POLICY

**Mr Dan Newman (Scarborough Centre):** My question is for the Deputy Premier and Minister of Finance. In the third-quarter finances for the province released last week, you indicate that the province is about \$500 million ahead of its deficit target for 1996-97. My constituents in Scarborough Centre want to know what this means for the government's fiscal plan. They want to know if the government is still spending \$1 million an hour more than it takes in in revenue. Minister, they want to know if the government is still on course.

**Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance):** As members of the finance committee of the Ontario Legislature will certainly know, the third-quarter finances report that was presented to the committee last Thursday was indeed positive news both with respect to the fact that our plan, despite what the opposition says, is working and that we are on track to eliminate the deficit in this province by the fiscal year 2000-01. We have made significant progress — there isn't any doubt about that — and we are about half a billion dollars ahead of our deficit target for this year, but the reality is that the deficit will still sit in this fiscal year at approximately \$7.7 billion. That clearly is unacceptable.

*Interjection.*

**Hon Mr Eves:** The honourable member said, "Stop your tax cut." He would know, if he was in the committee or read the Ontario third-quarter finances, that with a tax reduction in Ontario our tax revenue is up \$1.2 billion.

**Mr Newman:** The good news obviously continues. My supplementary is also for the Minister of Finance.



**Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands):** You're borrowing \$20 million.

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Order, the member for Kingston and The Islands.

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker:** Supplementary.

**Mr Newman:** I guess good news is hard to take on the part of the opposition.

My supplementary is also to the Minister of Finance. Various media reports on Friday suggested that as a result of the positive news in your fiscal and economic update, the government is planning to provide about \$1.8 billion in additional funding to municipalities and schools. Minister, what can I say to my constituents in Scarborough Centre? Are these reports true?

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker:** Well, I appreciate all the help I can get, but that's not helping a lot. Minister of Finance.

**Hon Mr Eves:** As I reported in committee on Thursday, we have changed the restructuring fund from \$900 million to \$1.8 billion for this fiscal year in light of the fact that we have additional revenue coming into the province of Ontario.

We have already allocated \$1.3 billion of that \$1.8 billion: \$700 million to the municipal social assistance reserve fund; \$250 million for a municipal capital and operating restructure fund which will be paid out in this fiscal year; \$200 million has been allocated for a new federal-provincial infrastructure works program; \$100 million has been allocated to the teachers' pension plan arbitration award; \$67 million has been allocated for municipal assumption of certain road and highway responsibilities, including accelerating Highway 416; and we still have a further \$483 million and will be looking at ways of allocating that.

I'm sure that my various cabinet colleagues, including the Minister of Health and others, will be providing suggestions as to how the remaining money can be allocated in this fiscal year.

GUY PAUL MORIN

**Mr Robert Chiarelli (Ottawa West):** To the Attorney General: I've been asked by the Guy Paul Morin family to bring to your attention a copy of the letter they sent to the Canadian Judicial Council, which I received this morning and which I've provided to you, in which they allege a conflict of interest on the part of Mr Justice Sydney Robins.

As you know, the terms of reference of the Morin inquiry include investigating into the criminal proceedings involving the murder charge. In 1987, Justice Robins was a judge on the appeal which reversed Mr Morin's acquittal and in which Mr Justice Robins commented, among other things, on the two inmates who were crown witnesses, one now known as Mr X. Mr Justice Robins may therefore, with others, become a subject of the inquiry.

Notwithstanding this, on Wednesday, January 22, 1997, Mr Justice Robins, the same judge, was one of the three judges refusing a court application at Mr Morin's request to lift a publication ban on the identity of Mr X. The

one-man commission, Mr Fred Kaufman, supported the court application —

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Thank you.

**Mr Chiarelli:** — to lift the publication ban —

**The Speaker:** Thank you. Member for Ottawa West, come to order.

**Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma):** Considering the importance of this —

**The Speaker:** You know, I understand what the member for Algoma is saying, but I don't know anyone who stands and asks a question who doesn't think it's important, and if you're going to live by the numbers, you have to. Attorney General.

**Hon Charles Harnick (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs):** It would be inappropriate for me to comment in any way on the issues pertaining to Mr Justice Robins. The Morins have taken the step of notifying the Canadian Judicial Council, and that is the appropriate place to deal with that issue.

Certainly if there was a decision made by the court of appeal that someone believed was wrong at law, their alternative would be to seek leave to appeal to the Supreme Court of Canada. That's another option that Mr Morin and his counsel can consider, but the matter has now been referred to the judicial council and it would be wrong to comment further.

**Mr Chiarelli:** Attorney General, I can understand why you'd want to be very cautious and perhaps take this question under advisement, but given that the police investigation and the criminal justice system are effectively on trial in the inquiry, you have a responsibility to deal with what is an emerging issue. The public identity of, the evidence of and the crown relationship to Mr X are of crucial interest to the Morin family and to the public, and this was reinforced by the commissioner in the court application.

Will you undertake to seek legal advice on this apparent conflict of interest and report back to this House with what you've decided and your course of action? It is very critical; it is being asked for by the Morin family, which has suffered greatly because of this; and there is an apparent conflict. Would you take it under advisement, get some legal advice and come back with your answer next week?

**Hon Mr Harnick:** The issue is now before Justice Kaufman and I have no doubt that Justice Kaufman will deal with these issues as they arise in the course of the inquiry. If there are steps to be taken where a court's advice is needed during the course of the inquiry, there's an appropriate way to deal with that, but certainly I have every confidence that Justice Kaufman will carry on with the inquiry, which will deal with the items that the member has raised.

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## CHILD CARE

**Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine):** My question is to the Minister of Community and Social Services. On repeated occasions I have asked you to be clear with us about what the details are for mandatory child care as of 1998 when you download the cost to



municipalities. The closest you've come was on February 3 when you said, "I recognize that municipalities are looking at their budgets, looking at what they think will be happening in the future, but we are saying to them that the number of spaces, the current system that is in existence now, is the system upon which we are planning."

Municipalities really want some clarity. Their social services departments are being told by bureaucrats in your ministry that "mandatory" means the same number of spaces they have now but not necessarily regulated spaces, that they could switch them to the informal, unregulated sector. There are many horror stories I could tell you about informal care and we're very worried that municipalities may do that. While you're working out your details, could you tell us what mechanisms you've put in place to ensure that the current level of regulated child care spaces will be maintained?

**Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Community and Social Services):** First of all, I'd like to remind the honourable member that we're not downloading anything. What we're doing is moving education off the property tax and making an equitable transfer of other costs and responsibilities to the municipalities. The other thing I think it's fair to remind the honourable member of is that the vast majority of parents, some 90% by the latest national study, do not use the regulated, formal child care sector, so we are talking about a minority of the children and the parents that are there.

But she does make a very valid point. We have been notifying municipalities that as a starting point the regulated system that is place now, the number of subsidies, the spaces that are being funded now, is the system that we are calculating and using for planning purposes as we move into the new Who Does What responsibilities. It is an important component of the child care system and we will be protecting it.

**Ms Lankin:** Here in Ontario about 28% of parents use unregulated, informal care. About 35% to 37% of kids who are in child care are in regulated care — so your national numbers don't work in Ontario — and that's because we fought to build a high-quality regulated system. This morning I met with Arden McGregor Templeton, who is a parent of three from London. She spelled out story after story of what happened with her children in unregulated care; when I did my hearings across the province, I heard example after example.

We should be expanding on regulated care, not threatening the loss of that. You need to make it very clear that you will not allow the subsidy dollars to be spent in informal, unregulated care. We need a guarantee that the current level of regulated child care spaces will at the very least be maintained or even expanded once you make child care mandatory. Will you please be clear? Will you please give us that guarantee?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** I'm certainly hoping that by working with our municipal partners, as we are doing in child care, we will be able to improve the child care support for parents out there. For many families child care makes the difference for them being able to get into the workforce or stay in the workforce, so it's certainly a

very important support that we are working with our municipalities to maintain.

I'd like to also to remind the honourable member that the current child care system does include unregulated spaces and also that we have a blended way of the subsidy supports that parents get. Some are indeed being used in the unregulated sector now. It is a component of the system.

There is no question that there are concerns about quality and accountability, which the member has highlighted. We certainly highlighted that very strongly in the child care review, and that's one of the issues that we are working with our municipal partners on to try and figure out how we can continue to provide quality support for parents who need child care.

## VOLUNTEERS

**Mr Toby Barrett (Norfolk):** My question is to the Minister of Natural Resources. In my riding of Norfolk there are many local volunteer groups, such as the Norfolk Field Naturalists, the local chapter of the hunters and anglers, who have an interest in seeing habitat improvements in our area. As you know, Long Point Bay in my riding is a great place for perch, bass and other species. As well, there are several coldwater streams which are trout producers. Can the minister explain what the Ministry of Natural Resources is doing to support volunteers who are involved in fishery projects?

**Hon Chris Hodgson (Minister of Natural Resources, Northern Development and Mines):** I'd just like to inform the honourable member and the House that volunteers play a very important part in the management of our natural resources in the province. We're especially appreciative of their efforts. We have supported them again this year through the community fisheries involvement program, commonly referred to as CFIP. These projects include fish culturing and stocking projects, spawning bed rehabilitations, stream rehabilitations, fish transfers and fish ladders, and many more worthwhile projects throughout the province.

We support these groups through seed money and through technical expertise. I just want to let the member and all members of the House know that this year we've supported more of these projects, up to half a million dollars in funding for over 242 projects throughout the province. That's an all-time record.

**Mr Barrett:** Norfolk is also blessed with an abundance of wildlife, such as wild turkey, which was a very successful re-establishment program in my riding —

**Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma):** I've met a few wild turkeys from Norfolk myself.

**Mr Barrett:** I am not referring to members on the other side when I use the expression "wild turkey."

Also, Norfolk is a staging area for many species of duck, tundra swan and other migratory waterfowl. I understand the Ministry of Natural Resources had similar projects for wildlife habitat. Can the minister explain what is happening with that program?

**Hon Mr Hodgson:** This is a very important issue. We have a similar project to encourage and help our volunteers contribute to wildlife rehabilitation and producing



better habitat for our animals in the province of Ontario. We do that through the community wildlife involvement program, referred to commonly as CWIP, and this year we increased that funding as well to include 140 wildlife projects across the province. We spent over \$191,000 in seed money to help that out, as well as technical expertise. We want to express our thanks to the thousands of volunteers throughout the province.

As well, this money is made possible because of the special purpose account. Every time an Outdoors Card, fishing licence or hunting licence is purchased in this province, that money goes to a special purpose account to be used specifically for wildlife rehabilitation.

### HOSPITAL FINANCING

**Mr Gerard Kennedy (York South):** My question is for the Minister of Health. There's been some talk in the House today about how well hospital staff are coping. Many of them were waiting for information from your ministry last week about whether or not they could keep their hospitals clean, about how many nurses they had to lay off. Your ministry circulated a list of cuts last week to the public and then circulated another list to the individual hospitals. There is a difference in those lists.

I'd like to tell you, for example, in the instance of St Catharines General Hospital that according to your ministry and the public figures for St Catharines General Hospital, \$3,121,000 has been cut. In fact, St Catharines General Hospital's been told that \$3,295,000 has been cut, a difference of \$173,000. The same is true for Brockville hospital, for Clinton hospital, variances of \$63,000 and \$17,000. Can you explain to us the difference in the figures that have been made public and the figures that have been told to the hospitals about how much they have to cut this year?

**Hon David Johnson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Minister of Health, Government House Leader):** Each hospital was informed directly of the funding it would receive from the province in the year 1997-98. I don't know what lists the member is referring to. My suspicion is that somehow the member has got his hands on an interim list, a partial list; I'm not sure. There was no list circulated by the ministry, so presumably the member opposite has received from somewhere a partial list. The hospitals were communicated with directly and they know exactly what funding they will receive from the province.

1500

**Mr Kennedy:** That's a totally unacceptable answer. This is your list. This is the Ministry of Health list, which you published, and it adds up to the cuts you yourself ascribed to those hospitals. Instead, when we talked not just to those three hospitals but to every hospital so far in the province, every one of them has been cut more. Why are you skimming money off these allocations? You've got one list for the public, your official list which I have right here that I'd be happy to share with you, and another one that you're sending to individual hospitals.

What are you up to? What is your ministry doing in cutting a total of \$23 million more? Are you using this money, are you skimming it off to pay for the so-called

reinvestments? Is that what's happening to this difference?

Will you at least do the right thing for hospitals across the province, like in Sault Ste Marie, that you've thrown into a state of confusion in the way you've done your cuts? Will you at least agree to the higher figure? Will you make sure they get —

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Thank you.

**Hon David Johnson:** The funding to hospitals is determined through a joint committee. The committee is called the JPPC. The JPPC is composed of representatives from the hospitals as well as the Ministry of Health and looks at the available funding and designates its recommended funding to the various hospitals. The Ministry of Health has accepted that recommendation, has accepted that advice from the hospital community, the JPPC, and through that process has allocated funding to each of the hospitals.

A year ago the Minister of Health laid out a process involving a multi-year funding program to the hospitals. The JPPC, in terms of its recent funding, has followed that allocation and the funding has been communicated directly to each individual hospital.

### GOVERNMENT MAIL SERVICE

**Mr Floyd Laughren (Nickel Belt):** I have a question for the Chair of Management Board. Last summer you decided, apparently, that one way of saving money to help pay for your tax cut was to privatize the mail services in about 15 ministries of your government, and I believe there are about 120 jobs at stake in that privatization. The employees presented a proposal to you last August which entailed some very significant savings and at the same time would have ensured some job security for some of the most vulnerable people.

My question to you is: Why did you ignore the proposals brought forward by the employees? And as a built-in supplementary, I ask you as well: Since there are about 30 employees with disabilities out of the 120, what do you plan to do to protect those most vulnerable employees of all if you proceed with your privatization plans?

**Hon David Johnson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Minister of Health, Government House Leader):** The services referred to by the member include courier services and duplicating services and mail services. The total cost to the provincial government of all those services is about \$12 million a year. The ministry has determined that taxpayers could be saved money, that there could be less cost, that it could be done more effectively and efficiently through outsourcing.

The employees are welcome to bid on that particular process. My understanding is that the employees did come forward before the process with an alternative suggestion, but it did not involve the level of savings the ministry anticipates receiving through the outsourcing project.

The provincial government gives additional points to any proposal that employs current employees of the province, and those proposals will have more weight and a better chance of winning.



## CORRECTION

**Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma):** Mr Speaker, on a point of privilege: You will know that on February 4, in speaking in the House on Bill 104, I referred to a rumour in the city of Sault Ste Marie that the Sault Ste Marie District Roman Catholic Separate School Board was laying off all of its auditing staff and hiring a Toronto accounting firm to do that work, and used this as an example of outsourcing or contracting out. I've been informed that that is not correct, that the Sault Ste Marie Roman Catholic separate school board has not made any decision as yet with this kind of thing in mind, so I was incorrect and I rise to correct the record.

## MOTIONS

STANDING COMMITTEE ON FINANCE  
AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS

**Hon David Johnson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Minister of Health, Government House Leader):** I move that notwithstanding the order of the House dated November 2, 1995, in addition to its regular scheduled meeting times, the standing committee on finance and economic affairs be authorized to meet for the purpose of pre-budget consultations Wednesday mornings and Wednesday afternoons following routine proceedings on February 12, 1997, February 19, 1997, and February 26, 1997.

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Does the motion carry? Carried.

## COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

**Hon David Johnson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Minister of Health, Government House Leader):** A shorter one this time, Mr Speaker.

I move that Mr Wildman be added as a member of the standing committee on social development.

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

## PETITIONS

## BIBLIOTHÈQUES PUBLIQUES

**M. Jean-Marc Lalonde (Prescott et Russell) :** J'ai ici une pétition qui me provient des Amis de la bibliothèque de Hawkesbury, avec 308 signatures.

«Étant donné que nous croyons fermement que la responsabilité provinciale dans les bibliothèques publiques en Ontario est un droit fondamental de tous les Ontariens et toutes les Ontariennes ;

«Nous, soussignés, demandons au membres de l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario de sauvegarder la responsabilité provinciale dans les bibliothèques publiques en s'assurant de maintenir ce qui suit :

«La subvention provinciale qui permet d'assurer à tous les Ontariens et à toutes les Ontariennes un accès équi-

table aux documents et aux services de bibliothèques publiques ;

«La coordination de programmes de partage des ressources tel que le système de prêts entre bibliothèques et l'accès au réseau Internet ;

«Une politique permettant d'assurer l'existence du réseau de bibliothèques publiques de l'Ontario ;

«L'aide directe de la part du gouvernement provincial au niveau de services, par exemple, par l'entremise du Service de bibliothèques de l'Ontario-Sud et du Service de bibliothèques de l'Ontario-Nord ;

«Une loi maintenant l'autonomie de conseils d'administration des bibliothèques publiques.»

J'y ajoute ma signature.

## HOSPITAL RESTRUCTURING

**Mrs Barbara Fisher (Bruce):** I am pleased to stand today on behalf of 6,827 residents who live in the town of Walkerton and area. The petition reads as follows:

"We, the undersigned, realizing the importance of local accessible hospital and medical services, therefore petition the district health council, the Minister of Health and the restructuring commission to continue to provide comprehensive hospital services at the County of Bruce General Hospital as well as at the facilities of its alliance partners, Chesley, Durham and Kincardine."

I support this petition and I am pleased to affix my signature.

## NORTH YORK BRANSON HOSPITAL

**Mr Monte Kwinter (Wilson Heights):** I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the final report of the Metropolitan Toronto District Health Council hospital restructuring committee has recommended that North York Branson Hospital merge with York-Finch hospital; and

"Whereas this recommendation will remove emergency and inpatient services currently provided by North York Branson Hospital, which will seriously jeopardize medical care and the quality of health for the growing population which the hospital serves, many being elderly people who in numerous cases require treatment for life-threatening medical conditions;

"We petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reject the recommendation contained within the final report of the Metropolitan Toronto District Health Council hospital restructuring committee as it pertains to North York Branson Hospital, so that it retains, at minimum, emergency and inpatient services."

I've affixed my signature.

1510

## MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

**Ms Isabel Bassett (St Andrew-St Patrick):** I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario signed by 182 people from the Annex Residents' Association and the Sussex-Ulster Residents' Association in my riding.

"Whereas we live in a democratic society where the principles of due process, representation and political accountability are dearly upheld; and



"Whereas the government of Ontario is thwarting these principles by imposing the megacity of Toronto without consideration for what the residents of the affected communities want;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the government of Ontario respect the wishes of the residents of the affected megacity communities as expressed in the referenda being sponsored by their duly elected municipal representatives; and that the government of Ontario be bound by the outcome of those referenda."

#### FIRE SAFETY

**Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury):** This is a petition in response to Bill 84.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the firefighters of Sudbury and Ontario are very concerned about Bill 84;

"Whereas we feel Bill 84 is unfair;

"Whereas we feel Bill 84 is discriminatory;

"Whereas we feel Bill 84 endangers the wellbeing of the people of Ontario;

"Whereas we feel Bill 84 requires extensive changes;

"Whereas we feel Bill 84 needs broad provincial public hearings before implementation;

"Whereas we are concerned and we don't want to get burned by Bill 84;

"We, the undersigned, therefore petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to demand the Solicitor General to rewrite Bill 84 before being enacted into law and only after extensive public hearings across Ontario."

I affix my name to the petition as I agree with it.

#### HOSPITAL RESTRUCTURING

**Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines):** I have a petition that reads as follows:

"Whereas the Conservative government of Mike Harris has closed three out of five hospitals in Thunder Bay and two out of three hospitals in Sudbury; and

"Whereas drastic funding cuts to hospitals across Ontario are intimidating hospital boards, district health councils and local hospital restructuring commissions into closing local hospitals; and

"Whereas hospitals in the Niagara region have provided an outstanding essential service to patients and have been important facilities for medical staff to treat the residents of the Niagara Peninsula and will be required for people in Niagara for many years to come; and

"Whereas the population of Niagara is on average older than that in most areas of the province;

"We, the undersigned, call upon the Minister of Health to restore adequate funding to hospitals in the Niagara region and guarantee that his government will not close any hospitals in the Niagara Peninsula."

I affix my signature as I'm in full agreement.

#### ADULT EDUCATION

**Mr Joseph Cordiano (Lawrence):** I have a petition from 304 people from my riding, the Yorkdale Adult

Learning Centre. They're calling to support full funding for adult students in day-time secondary school programs.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"We, the undersigned residents of Ontario, draw the attention of the Legislature to the following:

"Whereas the Ontario government in November 1995 decreed that the funding for adult students enrolled in high school programs would be cut by almost 70%;

"Whereas since this decision has taken effect many of these adult programs have been completely cut or severely reduced, thus denying many residents the right to a full education and access to work-related courses;

"Therefore, we call upon the Legislative Assembly to restore full funding to these programs."

I affix my signature to this petition.

#### ROMAN CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

**Mrs Lyn McLeod (Fort William):** "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the right of Catholic ratepayers to govern Catholic education in Ontario is constitutionally protected in the British North America Act (1867) and the Constitution Act (1982); and

"Whereas the Minister of Education and Training is reviewing and considering a number of reforms to the education system in Ontario; and

"Whereas a number of these proposed reforms would have a serious negative impact on Catholic education;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We strongly urge that the Minister of Education and Training be requested to reaffirm the government's commitment to the maintenance of Roman Catholic denominational rights, ensuring that any reforms will not lessen or abrogate any such rights; and

"Further, that the minister enter into realistic and meaningful consultation with all education stakeholders that will lead to positive change for students."

This is signed by a large number of individuals from across the province, and I've affixed my signature.

#### TVONTARIO

**Mr Frank Miclash (Kenora):** I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and it reads:

"We, the undersigned, strongly protest any plans to privatize TVOntario. The privatization of TVOntario would jeopardize Wawatay radio network's native language programming and Wahsa distance education services because both depend on TVO's distribution system."

That's signed by a good number of my constituents in North Caribou Lake, Weagamow, Round Lake, and I too attach my name to that petition.

#### MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

**Mr John L. Parker (York East):** I have a petition here signed by 18 East York residents. It reads as follows:

"We, the undersigned residents of East York, are in favour of the borough of East York remaining as a separate municipality."



### MANDATORY INQUESTS

**Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury):** This petition is to the Honourable Solicitor General and the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the Progressive Conservative government of Ontario has decided to scrap mandatory inquests as a result of fatalities in the mining and construction industry; and

"Whereas this unprecedented and callous decision sets workplace safety back 20 years;

"We, the undersigned, request that Solicitor General Bob Runciman, on behalf of all workers in the mining and construction industry, reverse his decision to remove mandatory inquests from the Coroners Act of Ontario."

I affix my name to this petition as I am in agreement with it.

### VIDEO LOTTERY TERMINALS

**Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines):** I have a petition that reads as follows:

"To the government of Ontario:

"Since video lottery terminals will contribute to gambling addiction in Ontario and the resulting breakup of families, spousal and child abuse and crimes such as embezzlement and robbery; and

"Since the introduction of video lottery terminals across Ontario will provide those addicted to gambling with widespread temptation and will attract young people to a vice which will adversely affect their lives for many years to come; and

"Since the introduction of these gambling machines across our province is designed to gain revenue for the government at the expense of the poor, the vulnerable and the desperate in order that the government can cut income taxes, to the greatest benefit of those with the highest income; and

"Since the placement of video lottery terminals in bars in Ontario and in permanent casinos in various locations across the province represents an escalation of gambling opportunities; and

"Since Premier Harris and Finance Minister Eves were so critical of the provincial government becoming involved in further gambling ventures and making the government more dependent on gambling revenues to maintain government operations;

"We, the undersigned, call upon Premier Harris and the government of Ontario to reconsider its announced decision to introduce the most insidious form of gambling, video lottery terminals, to restaurants and bars in the province."

I affix my signature as I'm in full agreement with this petition.

### HIGHWAY 17

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin):** The member for Grey-Owen Sound.

**Mr Bill Murdoch (Grey-Owen Sound):** Right. I knew you'd get it. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

I have a petition from the town of Bruce Mines.

"We, the undersigned residents of the town of Bruce Mines in the district of Algoma would like to extend our gratitude and sincere thanks to the Minister of Transportation, the Honourable Al Palladini, and the Minister of Northern Development and Mines, the Honourable Chris Hodgson, for the road improvements to Highway 17 from Sault Ste Marie to Bruce Mines.

"This is the first major road improvement in over 10 years in our area, and we, as residents of Algoma, salute you both for your commitment to the north and our highway system."

### PUBLIC LIBRARIES

**Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands):** I have about 125 individual petitions on postcards that are addressed to the Legislature of Ontario and they read as follows:

"I support free public libraries as the foundation of a literate, informed and prosperous population.

"I am therefore opposed to the repeal of the Public Libraries Act, the elimination of provincial conditional grants to public libraries, the eradication of library boards and the imposition of fees for the use of public libraries."

I concur with this and I affix my signature to same.

### SCHOOL PRAYERS

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin):** The member for Grey-Owen Sound, a petition.

**Mr Bill Murdoch (Grey-Owen Sound):** Yes. The last was a petition too, Mr Speaker.

This is a petition from the Grand Orange Lodge of Ontario West.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Being a firm supporter of the public school system and the Protestant faith;

"We, the undersigned, hereby petition the government of Ontario to reinstate the Lord's Prayer in the public school system of Ontario."

1520

### LIQUOR CONTROL BOARD OF ONTARIO

**Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines):** I have a petition that reads as follows:

"To the government of Ontario:

"Whereas the government of Ontario appears to be moving towards the privatization of retail liquor and spirit sales in the province; and

"Whereas the LCBO provides a safe, secure and controlled way of retailing alcoholic beverages; and

"Whereas the LCBO provides the best method of restricting the sale of liquor to minors in Ontario; and

"Whereas the LCBO has an excellent program of quality control of the products sold in its stores; and

"Whereas the LCBO provides a wide selection of product to its customers in modern, convenient stores; and

"Whereas the LCBO has moved forward with the times, sensitive to the needs of its customers and its clients; and



"Whereas the LCBO is an important instrument for the promotion and sale of Ontario wines and thereby contributes immensely to grape growing and the wine-producing industry;

"Therefore, be it resolved that the government of Ontario abandon its plan to turn the sale of liquor and spirits over to private liquor stores and retain the LCBO for this purpose."

I affix my signature as I'm in full agreement with this petition.

### VIDEO LOTTERY TERMINALS

**Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands):** I have a petition to the government of Ontario and it states as follows:

"Since video lottery terminals will contribute to gambling addiction in Ontario and the resulting breakup of families, spousal and child abuse and crimes such as embezzlement and robbery; and

"Since the introduction of video lottery terminals across Ontario will provide those addicted to gambling with widespread temptation and will attract young people to a vice which will adversely affect their lives for many years to come; and

"Since the introduction of these gambling machines across our province is designed to gain revenue for the government at the expense of the poor, the vulnerable and the desperate in order that the government can cut income taxes, to the greatest benefit of those with the highest income; and

"Since the placement of video lottery terminals in bars in Ontario and in permanent casinos in various locations across the province represents an escalation of gambling opportunities; and

"Since Premier Harris and Finance Minister Eves were so critical of the provincial government becoming involved in further gambling ventures and making the government more dependent on gambling revenues to maintain government operations;

"We, the undersigned, call upon Premier Harris and the government of Ontario to reconsider its announced decision to introduce the most insidious form of gambling, video lottery terminals, to restaurants and bars in the province."

I have affixed my signature to it.

### REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

#### STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE OMBUDSMAN

Mr Parker from the standing committee on the Ombudsman presented the committee's second report of 1997.

**Mr John L. Parker (York East):** I beg leave to present the second report of 1997 of the standing committee on the Ombudsman.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin):** Do you wish to make a brief statement, Mr Parker?

**Mr Parker:** No, thank you very much, Mr Speaker.

### ORDERS OF THE DAY

#### WATER AND SEWAGE SERVICES IMPROVEMENT ACT, 1997

#### LOI DE 1997 SUR L'AMÉLIORATION DES SERVICES D'EAU ET D'ÉGOUT

Resuming the adjourned debate on the motion for second reading of Bill 107, An Act to enact the Municipal Water and Sewage Transfer Act, 1997 and to amend other acts with respect to water and sewage / *Projet de loi 107, Loi visant à édicter la Loi de 1997 sur le transfert des installations d'eau et d'égout aux municipalités et modifiant d'autres lois en ce qui a trait à l'eau et aux eaux d'égout.*

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin):** I believe the member for Riverdale had the floor the last time.

**Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale):** I'm pleased to be on my feet again today to finish my party's, the NDP's, leadoff speech on this Bill 107. Before I get into further details I just want to remind you, Speaker, and other members of the House what this bill is about. It is one other component, one other piece of the downloading of services which this government is in the process of putting on to cash-starved municipalities all over Ontario.

I don't think a lot of people out there know about half of what this government is in the process of downloading. We've heard a lot about welfare in particular, because by now it's very clear that absolutely everybody, including the board of trade and David Crombie, is telling this government that downloading welfare is a big problem. We know that downloading long-term care is a big problem as the population ages. We know that downloading social housing is a big problem. We know that the downloading of the services we know about, that most of the public knows about, is wrong and that it's going to cost our cities and municipalities more money than taking education off municipal rolls and putting it on to provincial taxpayers. We know, it's been proven, studies show it, but this government doesn't seem to want to listen to any reputable studies that are done by experts.

Because they have absolutely no evidence that forming a megacity is going to actually save taxpayers money, they get desperate for this information, and what do they do? They go out and hire a firm to do a quick study within three weeks, people who were told not even to talk to the workers in the very area in which they were doing this study. Anyway, they came back and said there would be savings, but even they had a hard time, in those three weeks, to find where the savings would be. Interestingly enough, the savings they talk about are actually the cutting of services. I recommend that the government look a little more closely.

*Interjection.*

**Ms Churley:** Thank you very much. Western beaches tunnel: Yes, that's relevant to this discussion today on sewer and water services.

Most people out there do not know that one of the other megaprojects this government is handing down to the municipalities is our very water and sewer services. When people begin to understand the implications of that, I believe there's going to be a very big outcry. You will



recall, Speaker, that last year the member for Nickel Belt and I stood in this House and challenged the Minister of Environment and the finance minister on reports that this government, the Harris government, was actually going to start privatizing our water. We believe there was a big enough reaction in the public that the government decided, just as it has done for now on Hydro, to back off.

But what are they doing in this bill? The actions of this government are underhanded once again in the way it is privatizing our sewer and water systems through the back door. What we have here in Bill 107 is the transfer, the downloading, of all our sewer, water and septic systems across Ontario to the municipalities. All the existing agreements with the municipalities are left in limbo. This bill says to the municipalities that if they have an agreement with the provincial government for new infrastructure or whatever, they're left in limbo. This bill cancels all that. This is on top of the government already cancelling the municipal funding for infrastructure and building new sewer and water plants, new infrastructure, and the repairing, which alone is a multi-million-dollar expense across the province.

There are no more new agreements, and now municipalities are being told that on top of all the other services they now inherit from this government, they also have to finance their water and sewerage commitments. I can assure you right now — the government knows this, and that's why I'm calling it underhanded. They know what they're doing. They are interested in privatizing the sewer and water system in Ontario.

There is a lineup of people from out of the country, from France, from the United States, from England. The minister confessed to it. He said that for a while he was having trouble going anywhere without being caught up in an onslaught of private investors who just couldn't wait for this government to privatize the system because they know there is a lot of money in providing water services to people.

What this government did, when it got scared off from actually privatizing it themselves, was to come up with a very interesting and creative bill. What this bill does is download it all on to the municipalities, and they say that the bill is written in such a way that they want to discourage private ownership, want to encourage public ownership. If that is true, why don't they put an explicit prohibition against selling off these plants right in the bill? The reason is because they have no intention of prohibiting or trying to discourage municipalities from selling off these plants. In fact, the government knows very well that there are already some municipalities out there interested in going ahead and selling off their sewer and water systems. This gives them permission to do so. 1530

What also is in the bill, the one piece the government holds up to try to demonstrate that it is, in this bill, making it difficult to sell off sewer and water plants — it's laughable, absolutely ridiculous. They say that if the private sector buys a plant that is municipally owned, they will have to pay back any public grants that this municipality had received for that plant in the past. Well, if you look at the amount of money any municipality has

received for a plant, it's peanuts, it's nothing. There's no interest on it and there's no depreciation either. It's a small cost of doing business. They know that, you know that, and I think it's only fair to be honest with the public and let them know what's really going on here.

One of the things that annoys me and frustrates me about this government is that they do their slick ads and they have their great names for the titles of their bills — the sewer and water improvement act; I have to give them credit for that — but it's not fair to the people of Ontario. What they say they are doing is not what they are going to be doing; furthermore, they know it. Because I have to use parliamentary language here, I am being very careful about how I express it, but I think everybody here knows —

**Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands):** I think you can get away with almost anything right now.

**Ms Churley:** I think the member for Kingston and The Islands is correct: I could probably get away with almost anything right now. Maybe I should try it.

This government is not being honest with the people of Ontario. This government —

**Mr John L. Parker (York East):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I draw your attention to the comments we just heard from the honourable member opposite and I ask you to pass judgement on them.

**Mr Gerretsen:** There's nothing out of order, Mr Chair.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Please. I didn't hear anything, but I'm sure if she said anything which was contrary to the rules of the House she would apologize, if this is the case. Is this the case?

**Ms Churley:** Mr Speaker, I'd be very pleased to withdraw those comments.

What I was talking about was that the government — I'm trying to put this in a parliamentary way — is telling the people of Ontario one thing and doing another. We see it time and time again with all these bills. I believe the government is feeling pretty cocky about what it's up to because it continues to be high in the polls.

That will not continue. One day people are going to figure out what you're really up to, and when they do that I think there's going to be a huge drop in your popularity and you're going to see more and more of the backbenchers, some of whom are with us today, starting to react a little bit to their own government's agenda. The municipalities, AMO, a lot of Tory-friendly municipalities, are not pleased with this downloading. I haven't heard a lot from them yet about this downloading of the sewer and water services, but I can assure you that the government will, we all will.

Some of them might say it's no big deal because they can privatize it, that the bill makes it so easy for a municipality to take its system and just sell it off to a company that will use the very life-sustaining water and our sewer systems and our septic systems. I may add that the government is now going to get out of the environmental protection of regulating septic systems and hand that down to the municipalities, not seeming to realize the serious environmental problems that have come as a result of improperly installed septic tanks — a very serious mistake. I have told the government that I will be



making an amendment on that. I prefer that they withdraw this whole bill. I don't think they're going to do that. I will have a series of amendments and that will be one of them.

Another amendment I will have is that within the bill the government makes it totally explicit that municipalities cannot sell off their water and sewage plants. They say they want to discourage that. Why not be perfectly clear?

I have some other concerns about the bill. Obviously, there are a lot of questions that need to be answered, which is why I am calling for public hearings. Last Wednesday, when we began debating this bill, I had a letter, which I read into the record, from Rick Lindgren from CELA, asking for public hearings. I believe I've heard back indirectly from the House leader that they haven't received a lot of requests for public hearings on this bill. I want to assure the government that they will. People are just starting to figure out what's going on, and they'll be getting lots of notices and lots of requests from the public, from environmental groups, which I know this government holds in complete contempt.

I've sat on committees and seen, time and time again, the way they're treated, the way they're shut out of the process. But they will continue to come forward and demand to be heard. Even if they're not listened to at this point, they will be on the record, and God forbid it's going to happen, but one day we're going to be able to look at certain disasters because of the actions of this government on the environmental front. Unfortunately, it's going to happen and these people are going to be able to say, "Told you so."

That is the legacy this government is going to leave the environment over the years, with all of the downloading and deregulation and the cuts, and the cuts in staff. It's going to take some time. You're not going to see the results of this tomorrow. It's not like losing a job right now. Unemployment is at the top of everybody's mind, for good reason. People want something done about it now. It's disgraceful. This government ran and said it was going to create all these jobs, and more and more jobs are being lost. People are terrified.

In the meantime, the government continues to say it's going to give a tax cut, which we all know will mainly benefit the rich. They say that this tax cut is going to create jobs. There's no evidence to support that. In the meantime nothing is happening with the creation of jobs. They are giving a tax cut to the wealthy and in the meantime they are pulling the funding from the Ministry of Environment and Energy, the money that's there that's supposed to be protecting our environment, protecting the health of us and our children today.

They want to talk about deficits. I'll tell you about deficits. There is more than monetary deficits. The reason these environmental laws came into being over the last 20 or 30 years is because our society was feeling the effects of a neglected environment. It was and still is costing taxpayers hundreds of millions of dollars, in fact billions of dollars, to clean up past mistakes.

Today — very timely, actually — we had yet another example of what this government is doing. There is absolutely no end to it. This morning I got up and saw

the headline on the front page of the Globe and it said, "Government Cuts Environmental Funding," or something. I don't have it in front of me. I have it here somewhere, actually. Do you know what? What scares me about this stuff is we see these headlines — here it is: "Ontario Cuts Pollution Funds." We're seeing these headlines so much now, people are going to become insensitive to it. That's part of the problem.

1540

It's almost a daily basis now when the press bothers to pay attention to what's happening in the environment, and the press is not paying a lot of attention, for a variety of reasons. I think they should be; I wish the press were paying more attention. I'm happy to see Martin Mittelstaedt from the Globe is paying a lot of attention. He seems to get a lot of brown envelopes sent his way, which is good. But I'm happy to see there are some reporters who are managing to get their stories in the paper. Brian McAndrew from the Star, from time to time, through all the megacity blitz support in the Star, gets a good story in on what's happening with environmental cuts.

It's important that our media, the media who are working on environmental stories, do what we in our caucuses do. I have to go to question period meetings. We have to decide every day, Speaker, as you do in your caucus, what questions are going to be asked. With this government in particular, there's such a long list of important questions every day, it's very difficult to choose which questions you're going to get on.

I and the staff — Charlie Campbell, who works in our research department on environmental and labour and other issues — go and persuade our caucus that these — and it's not hard to persuade them, but there is a problem in terms of the lineup and the awful things this government is doing right across the board to our society, to our communities, to the most vulnerable in our communities, to the environment.

I get these questions on and I like to see those from the different media. Bob Hunter is another one, from CITY-TV. They have to do the same thing. They have to go back and they have to fight with their editorial boards. I don't know how their structures work, but it's the same thing: There's a lot of competition there for what gets in the paper and what doesn't. I want to congratulate and thank those reporters and journalists who are able to get these stories in, and encourage them to keep fighting harder to do that, because the public needs to be made aware of how bad this is going to be.

When I read this this morning, "Ontario Cuts Pollution Funds," I didn't know what it was about, but I thought: "Oh, what now? Another one." Then I was shocked, and I continue to be shocked.

**Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines):** You should be.

**Ms Churley:** Genuinely, to the member for St Catharines, I can't believe how far these guys go. I mean, the depths. I read this story and what it's telling us is that now this government is breaking international agreements. I don't think they realize the significance of that. When we start breaking our international agreements, we lose our clout, we lose our voice. We lose any credibility



in the international forum when we break those agreements. Canada has had, overall, a fairly good record — not great — in terms of going on to the international forum. The acid rain agreement was one, although I would love to talk about that in detail some day, the acid rain agreement which my friend from St Catharines was involved in. I've got the scoop on that one.

The reality is that these international agreements are important not just in terms of cleaning up our shared resources. Of course the Great Lakes span the United States and Canada, and it's been very hard to get agreements between the two countries.

We're talking about multibillion-dollar cleanups, because it was left for so long with industry continuing to pollute with no checks and balances, just dumping it into the rivers —

**Mr Bradley:** That's right, all those Tory years.

**Ms Churley:** "All those Tory years," mentions my friend from St Catharines.

The reality is that it has to be cleaned up. The press conference today is about the cleanup of the Great Lakes. Years ago the International Joint Commission made some recommendations on how to go about such a massive undertaking, especially when you have two different countries, multi layers of government all involved in the process and lots of industry involved but some industry that had polluted years ago no longer around. It is a very difficult process and you need incredible coordination to make it work. You have to have a multistakeholder group to make it work, these remedial action groups which the minister is no longer funding, and according to the report in the paper, in the *Globe and Mail*, Minister Sterling said he does support these policies but he can't afford to do it any more.

The reason this is relevant to the bill we're talking about today, Bill 107, is because this report talks about not only the great need to clean up the pollution, particularly in the hot spots, but also the great need for a coordinated tests conservation program for water.

We take water so for granted. We turn on our taps, there's clean water. We flush the toilet, it's gone out into the lake. We don't know, we don't care, it's gone. We go out and we water our lawns on hot days, we go out and wash our cars, and that's just as individuals. Then there are farmers, there is industry. We all use far more water than necessary because we've never had to worry about it.

Lo and behold, we do have to worry about it. The information released in this report today, *The Fate of the Great Lakes: Draining the Sweetwater Seas*, what it says is that if we don't start conserving water seriously the level of our water supply is going to drop. You heard me in question period today talking a bit about that.

As I said to the Minister of Environment, even if he doesn't care about the environment — and I would say to all the members of the Tory party we know they don't care about environmental protection, there's absolutely no question of that any more, that's a given; but they do say they care about tourism and job sustainability in their communities, all that stuff. We even had the mayor from Parry Sound at this press conference this morning because of concerns raised by this group if the levels do

drop, the implication that will have on tourism and other industry in the Parry Sound area.

I would say to this government, if they're not listening to the environmentalists, listen to people like the mayor of Parry Sound, listen to the people who were at this press conference today, and understand that this is not — and I hate to do this because I believe that protecting the environment is one of the most fundamental things that we as a society can do in terms of the legacy we leave our children and our grandchildren.

We hear time and time again from this government, when they get up and rant and rave about getting rid of the deficit, how we mustn't leave a deficit to our kids and our grandkids. They always neglect to mention that there's this little thing like a tax cut. As I understand it, I don't believe that any of their drastic cuts to date have had the tiniest impact on the deficit reduction. It's all going towards this tax cut.

They talk about leaving a deficit to our children and our grandchildren. We've got to start paying attention to other kinds of deficits. When we get alarming information that our water levels are going to go that low, that it's going to have these kinds of very scary effects, you talk about leaving a deficit to our children.

I just find it incredible that the members of that party over there, the Harris government party, do not pay more attention to other sorts of deficits and, furthermore, down the road, the kind of devastation, and I'm not exaggerating here, that will happen to various components of our environment and to our health as the result of the deregulation, the cutting and slashing and burning by this government.

We know there are going to be big problems down the road which are not only going to affect our children's, our grandchildren's and our great-grandchildren's health, we know that, but are also going to cost them a lot of money.

**1550**

Let's face it, we in here are all going to be dead — I know it's a big downer, but we are — when, a few generations from now, this kind of lack of attention and care for our physical environment is going to start having effects on people.

I got hard-won, all-party support last year on a private member's bill to form a stakeholders' group to try to find ways and make recommendations to start the elimination of carcinogens, the dioxins and chlorines and other chemicals out there. There is enough evidence now — in some cases not definitive evidence, but enough evidence — that indicates that breast cancer, prostate cancer and other forms of cancer are being caused by some of these in minute amounts in the body. There is some evidence — and everybody says there needs to be more research — very scary evidence that some of these, like dioxins and chlorines, are mimicking hormones in the body and are actually having an effect on our immune systems and on our ability to continue the human race. That's pretty serious indeed.

**Mr Gerretsen:** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I don't believe we have a quorum in the House.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Would you please check to see if there is a quorum.



**Clerk Assistant and Clerk of Committees (Ms Deborah Deller):** A quorum is not present, Speaker.

*The Deputy Speaker ordered the bells rung.*

**Clerk Assistant and Clerk of Committees:** A quorum is now present, Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The member for Dovercourt — Riverdale. Sorry.

**Ms Churley:** Mr Speaker, I'm shocked you could forget where I'm from. After all, I'm one of the deputy Chairs.

Coming back to my discussion of the importance of protecting our environment, I was discussing the fact that there is enough evidence now to support the phasing out of certain chemicals that are affecting our very ability to create new life, are mimicking our hormones, are affecting the immune system. This is all fairly new research, but the evidence is very frightening.

At any rate, I got all-party support in this House that the Minister of Health — during our government's term, Ruth Grier was the Minister of Health. There was enough concern about cancer and the increase in cancer in our society that a major study was done, and one component of it was environmental aspects; the study looked at the foods we eat, the air we breathe, all that stuff, but a component of it was on chemicals and pollutants.

This was one of the recommendations. Because this government, the Harris government, is not acting on any of the recommendations, I picked one small piece of it and said that at least, because this could have such a devastating impact even on the future of our race, on our very survival, let's put together this group of people to come up with sensible recommendations. Let's even try to reach a consensus, hard as it would be — it always is when you have industry and environmentalists and community people and government people — some kind of consensus on starting to phase out some of the worst chemicals we know about. We have enough evidence that we know they need to be phased out.

I can't get this government to respond in any way. I tried and tried with Jim Wilson when he was the Minister of Health and he kept putting me off. Finally, I tried Brenda Elliott and she put me off. Now I'm trying with Norm Sterling. Everybody's passing the buck here.

**Mr John R. Baird (Nepean):** Oh, come on.

**Ms Churley:** It's true, member for Nepean. It is true. I have been trying since last year — I don't know if you were in the House; perhaps you were and perhaps you supported this — to get this multistakeholder group together, and I need the guidance of the Minister of Health, but they won't do it. I would just ask members who supported me on that bill to assist in pulling that together, and I know there were some Tory members. The member for Nepean said he did. The member for Mississauga South supported me; in fact I saw her whipping some of the troops over there in getting support for me. I've always said publicly that I was grateful for Margaret Marland's, the member for Mississauga South's, involvement in that. But nothing's happening.

It just goes to show that you can have the best private member's bill in the world passed, but if the government — the cabinet, I should say — doesn't want it to go anywhere, it won't go anywhere. There are still lots of

letters and phone calls coming in about that, and this is not the end of it yet.

I want to come back to why this press conference today, and by coincidence the story in the paper, are so relevant to the bill we're discussing today. I'm going to read you a little bit from the press conference about the environmental impacts. It says:

"Water quality in the Great Lakes could be detrimentally affected. Within the diversion route itself there may be increases in water quality due to an increased dilution of pollutants. However, water quality may be reduced where water levels are lower. Lower lake levels increase the disturbance of contaminated sediments by ships and by storms. This results in the release of contaminants from the sediments, making them available to the food chain. The contaminants are, as a result, passed from fish to the birds, animals and humans who eat them.

"Wetlands are particularly sensitive to changes in water levels. Any loss of these wetlands affects the habitat of the fish and wildlife who live there. Fish spawning areas could be seriously affected. Loss of wetlands also means the loss of the numerous beneficial functions of wetlands, which include groundwater recharge, shoreline erosion prevention, temporary floodwater storage and water filtration by absorption of sediment, chemicals and nutrients."

This goes on and on about the devastating effects just a small drop in our water levels could mean. I read a quote today during question period in the House, and I'll read it again:

"Decreased lake levels could change beaches and shorelines and would leave docks and shipping and boat accesses above the water line. This would decrease shorefront property values. Recreational activities such as boating, fishing and hunting may also be negatively affected."

As I said earlier in this speech today and asked the Minister of Environment, if they don't care about the environment, if they honestly believe they can make all these cuts and fire all these people and still think they're doing more with less, God bless them, because we all know that's not going to work and that the environment isn't being protected. But surely they've got to pay attention to a study like this, which is going to impact on our property values, tourism and the economy, because they do at least pretend to care about these things.

**1600**

So this report is relevant because while the government is in the process of downloading sewer and water services to the municipalities, they have gotten rid of OCWA, the Ontario Clean Water Agency, which was created under our government as a partnership between the private sector and the public sector. One of its main mandates was to work with municipalities to come up with conservation methods.

I mentioned last week an example of Barrie coming to the province desperately needing more treatment facilities and requesting huge amounts of moneys — I don't have the numbers in front of me today but it will be earlier in Hansard — to expand that treatment centre. Working with the green communities, which I talked about again last week — this government also got rid of that, which was



all about water conservation and energy efficiency — and with the OCWA conservation program, they were able to save millions of dollars, therefore millions of taxpayers' dollars that this government so likes to say they are going to save. Conservation is a dollars-and-cents issue as well, but now we find out that it's far more than that.

So with the getting rid of OCWA and downloading our sewer and water plants on to the municipalities, there's absolutely no conservation program in place — nothing. I will admit to you that when we were the government I felt far more needed to be done, that in many ways this was just the beginning, working with municipalities and citizens and industry and agriculture to start serious, real conservation of our water.

What does this government do? They look at the books and figure out they've got to get certain services off their books and on to the municipalities. They download them and they don't even say a word about conservation and efficiency. Nothing. Nada. It's all gone. Just, "We'll download it on to you; we don't care what you do with it," pretend they are encouraging keeping the sewer and water plants in the public sphere, and then make it so easy, not only easy but necessary, for the municipalities to sell the plants because they're not going to be able to maintain them. They're not going to be able to keep up the deteriorating infrastructure.

Believe me, Speaker, I'm sure most of the backbenchers don't have a clue about sewer and water projects, not a clue, and I'm sure most of the cabinet ministers don't know about it, but I can assure you that the finance minister and a few others know exactly what they are doing here. It's very, very dangerous policy, because once again we're not going to feel the effects of these cuts and these changes and this downloading for some time. But I would recommend to the government that it take it for granted that there will be calls to have public hearings not just from me and not just from environmentalists, but I would expect that AMO, some of the municipalities, would be interested in having their say publicly on some of this and trying to exert some influence with this government. I would think there are many out there who would like to have an opportunity to speak to this.

I spoke last week about the Ontario Municipal Water Association, and they are calling for a public hearing on this. They had called for a public hearing back on December 3, 1996, and the heading to their press release was "Ontario's Drinking Water in Jeopardy: Ontario Municipal Water Association Calls for Public Hearings." Speaker, I'm going to read you a bit of this. It says:

"The Ontario Municipal Water Association today challenged Premier Mike Harris to undertake full public hearings into the provision of drinking water in the province. Representing members who supply water to eight million Ontario residents, the Ontario Municipal Water Association today warned that the government is jeopardizing the future of Ontario's water system through deliberate policies of neglect and deregulation without benefit of public input or consideration of alternatives.

"We believe the government is opening the floodgates to the irreversible deterioration of water services in Ontario," said Don Black, executive director of OMWA.

'It's a situation that is transforming Ontario's reliable and safe water service into one marked by chaos and fragmentation. The government clearly has no plans to safeguard our drinking water and to ensure the high-quality, low-cost and reliable water system we enjoy today.'"

The press release goes on to say: "'The Ontario government is shredding its responsibilities for this vital service, to the detriment of all Ontario residents,' says Black. 'Water is a vital service, not a commodity to be bought and sold, and public health should not be compromised by lax standards and minimum enforcement.'"

Last week I talked at great length about what happened in England after Thatcher privatized the sewer and water systems. I'm sure my colleague the member for Nickel Belt, who is our critic for privatization, will be talking about that a little later on. There is absolutely no doubt about it that in England there are private sector companies making a lot of money selling a basic necessity like water.

**Mr Jim Flaherty (Durham Centre):** Oh no, not for profit.

**Ms Churley:** Yes, for profit. Selling water for profit.

**Interjection:** It's a sin.

**Ms Churley:** Yes, I think it's a sin.

**Interjection:** "Profit" is a bad word. It's a mortal sin.

**Ms Churley:** No, "profit" is not a bad word; "profit" can be a good word. But selling water for profit is disgusting and despicable and immoral.

**Interjection:** It's on the record.

**Ms Churley:** Yes, it's on the record. You guys think it's funny. You clap, you laugh and say to me that I've got something against profit. You don't get it. As usual, they don't get it; they just jump on the word "profit" and make a big deal out of that, "Here's a New Democrat once again decrying profit," not listening to the rest.

We live in a capitalist system, for heaven's sake. Profit, that's what makes the world go around, isn't it? But there is something fundamentally wrong when we get to a point when we have a government in Ontario that feels it's okay for the private sector to move in and start making a profit off water. There is something very sick about that. It makes me angry that they think that's okay. Water is something we need to sustain life, and they think it's okay to sell it off to the private sector so they can make a huge profit.

Look what happened in England. It was like reading something about a Third World country or a developing nation. There were little pamphlets put out by caring folks in England saying, "Save the water for our poor children." Do you know what was happening while these companies were making the big profit, while they were allowing the system to deteriorate? The loss of water was so great that there were great droughts and big problems, but what was going on as well is that they came up with a meterized system so that people had to plug in a special card to be scanned.

If poor people did not have that card passed through on time and scanned that they'd paid their bill, their water was automatically cut off. There were children — are children in England who are going to school with no water in their homes. They had to go to school unwashed,



no water to drink, their clothes unwashed, and you think that's okay for these corporations to be out there making big profits while poor children go for months without any water. That is sick.

1610

I don't believe that traditional Tory values would support that. I don't believe that traditional Tory values would support the concept that it's okay for big — in many cases, if it's sold off here in Ontario, it will be offshore companies from England, from France, which will be taking huge profits out of our province back to their own countries while some people here, if it happens the same way it happened in England, won't have proper access to water.

I would suggest to the members of this government who think it's okay for our water to be sold off for profit that they think again. There is a limit to what we should put up for profit. I would say that water, for me, goes beyond that limit, and I would suggest the government members think about that. But of course they have to believe it's the right thing to do because that's what they're doing in downloading these responsibilities to municipalities.

In Beaches-Woodbine, the Ashbridges Bay plant is one of the biggest sewage treatment plants around, probably in the world. It's been incinerating sewage for a number of years, and there is a group in the Beaches-Woodbine community, but also many people from my community of Riverdale from Citizens for a Safe Environment and other people who have been concerned for years about the dioxins and other pollutants coming out of that stack from the burning of the sewage sludge.

There's now going to be an environmental assessment about the expansion of that plant. Interestingly enough, coming back to water conservation again, there would not have to be an extension of many plants and we could save so much money if only the government would move ahead and bring in sound water conservation policies, which it's going to have to do. I don't expect this government to do it, but it's going to have to happen. But the member for Beaches-Woodbine's community and my community have been working for years and years, struggling with all levels of government to try to work this out.

Now what's going to happen? There's been an overflow problem in the western beaches for years during storms, the storm runoff. They're going to put a huge tunnel from the western beaches to Ashbridges Bay to deal with that sewage runoff. We know that the citizens from Beaches-Woodbine and from Riverdale have for years come up with really innovative, creative ways to avoid having to build that tunnel. Building that tunnel is an engineer's dream. The Metro engineers have been unable to look at other solutions to this problem, and believe me, they do exist.

We have to take a hard new look at the way we as a society deal with our waste, and that's not just solid waste and hospital waste but also sewage waste. There are all kinds of creative ways out there and creative people with ideas that this government is refusing to listen to.

I'm going to end here to talk again about the fact that we need to have public hearings on this bill. I hope we won't have a big struggle with the House leader as we have had over the past few weeks with getting appropriate and adequate public hearings on Bill 103, the megacity bill, and Bill 104, which we do not have adequate public hearings on. There was a small concession made to our party last Thursday where the government did agree to a little bit of extra hearings, but it's still not nearly enough. I hope we're not going to have a big struggle with this government over the need for these hearings.

As I said, there will be calls for public hearings and there is a need to have public hearings to get this information on the table. Believe it or not, government members might learn something from the expertise of the people out there. Not just the environmentalists but the municipalities, those who are the engineers, the people who are running our sewer and water plants. The government needs to hear about this proposed bill and —

**Mr Floyd Laughren (Nickel Belt):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I was wondering whether there's a quorum.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson):** Is there a quorum?

**Clerk Assistant and Clerk of Committees:** A quorum is not present, Speaker.

*The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.*

**Clerk Assistant and Clerk of Committees:** A quorum is now present, Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** The Chair recognizes the member for Riverdale.

**Ms Churley:** Thank you. I'll be pushing for public hearings on this and I fully expect them.

In closing, what is this bill? The title is a fake, a phoney title. It says it is improving the system. In fact, what it is is part of the mega-week downloading, and it got buried and disappeared because of the concern and worry about all of the other downloading. But I believe when people start to realize and when municipalities start to realize the implications of this, because even those municipalities that will feel compelled, even those that want to privatize — and this bill gives them every opportunity to do so — I believe they will get an outcry from the citizens in their communities, because I believe, unlike most of the Tory members who are here today, most residents will not want their water sold off, and if their water is going to be sold off, they'll want to know the implications of that.

That's really what this bill is all about, because it is part of the downloading. It's the government getting out of the responsibility of providing clean, safe water for our citizens. It's the government getting out of regulating septic tanks, which is the cause of some major environmental problems and health problems and has been for a long time. It's the government downloading services that rightly belong to the provincial level, to municipalities. But we know what it is they are really doing. I started this and I said throughout my speech on this bill that the government started off by wanting to privatize water. They have friends out there who want to make a profit off our water.



The Minister of Environment said it publicly. He was bragging about it: "Gee, I can hardly go to functions any more. They're lining up and begging me to hurry up and put the water up for sale." Industry from France and from offshore, from England, knows there's a huge profit in it. They've seen what has happened in England. They don't care about all the problems it created, which I know my colleague from Nickel Belt will get into again a little later. They know there's lots of money in it, and this government made, I think, some very big promises to some very big corporations.

What this bill is really all about is downloading a service to municipalities which can't afford to maintain those services. They have done nothing with the bill, nothing to make it difficult for municipalities to sell it off. They've pretended to by saying: "Oh well, any public money which was put into that plant will have to be paid off. We know it's peanuts, it's a part of doing business. That will be easy." That's the only stipulation in the bill that will prevent the privatization.

So what we're really talking about here today is not downloading because it's privatization. The downloading in this case is going to mean massive privatization, which I object strenuously, and I can assure you my party will be doing everything we can to fight the privatization of water.

1620

**The Acting Speaker:** Comments or questions?

**Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland):** I'm pleased to respond to the member, the critic for the environment. I can assure her that even though she's trying to build a motion like we're the worst things ever possible, we are watching some of the experiences in other countries and what's happened there, particularly the experience in England. We do not agree with how the water and sewer are presently managed there, even though the critic isn't interested in my response to what she had to say.

We are promoting the encouragement that it does stay within the municipality by insisting that any grants given out since 1978 would have to be given back to the province. I think that will certainly encourage them to keep that as a municipally owned facility. We're not against them having private companies running those facilities; as a matter of fact, it sounds like a good idea, if they can be so fortunate as to make a profit. Even she agreed that "profit" isn't particularly a bad word.

We see that water and sewer are really a municipal benefit to local people and we've seen where, according to David Crombie, lobbying for the provincial government, they've come in with great, big plants, get all kinds of grants for very large plants, plants so big that it ends up they can't afford to operate those and have had to come back to the province to get more dollars to actually operate and make them run.

**Mr Gerretsen:** She wasn't talking about that at all.

**Mr Galt:** I think when we turn this over and get the local municipality totally responsible, it is going to be a lot more efficient and a lot more effective, even though the critic and the member for Kingston and The Islands may not think so.

I can also assure you that with the septic system, as that's turned to the municipalities and we insist on the

training and the certification of those inspectors, there's going to be far more uniformity than there is now in the checkerboard sort of patchwork we have across the province of Ontario.

**Mr Bradley:** The member for Riverdale, of course, fully recognizes the context in which this bill appears in this House, and the context was exemplified by the reaction of the minister today to rather significant criticism of the fact that he's no longer going to fund remedial action plans. The whole purpose of remedial action plans was, first of all, to develop such a plan, and second, to implement that plan.

Some of the development has taken place with funding which was in place in years gone by, and now, when it's time to put the money on the table to actually improve the environment, the minister has turned tail and headed in a different direction. Because he knows, as the member has pointed out, that they have cut \$200 million from the environment budget, that they have reduced by almost one third the staff of the Ministry of Environment, a ministry that requires person-power and funding and physical resources and clout to do its job. It's obviously diminishing in all four of those areas rather significantly, and the member has recognized that.

She has also spotted the hidden agenda of the Mike Harris government. I read a column from the new columnist in the Ottawa Citizen. He's 28 years old, he's younger than some of the members here, but he knows everything. He was previously a policy analyst for Mike Harris and, before that, the Fraser Institute. So I know Conrad Black's not interfering in that paper at all, not at all. Anyway, he said that Mike Harris was not a neo-con. In other words, Mike Harris is too left-wing even for this writer. This member will see through that, and she has, obviously, in her speech.

**Ms Shelley Martel (Sudbury East):** I want to commend my colleague the member for Riverdale for her comments here this afternoon with respect to this bill and add that she continues to have a very strong concern for the impact of the government cuts on the environment. She has done her best in not only this speech but many others that she has made on environmental matters and the deregulation by this government throughout the 18 months that this government has been in power.

What you see here in this bill really is privatization by the back door. That's what this is all about and people should know that up front. The government has already, in its effort to finance the tax cut, cut off all of the capital grants which used to be available to municipalities for sewer and water systems. Many small municipalities, in northern Ontario in particular, made use of those grants because they didn't have the financial base in their own communities to put in sewer and water systems or to make changes and they relied on that heavily. Now the government washes its hands because it is far more important to this government to fund the tax cut than it is to make sure that small communities in northern Ontario have adequate sewer and water systems.

The second thing the government has done is to unload the services on to municipalities, and they did that through mega-week as well. So not only do municipalities not have access to grants any more, but the government



is offloading hundreds and hundreds of millions of dollars of other costs, in the regional municipality \$105 million alone, so that many communities just won't have the funds they need to improve their sewage and water systems. They're going to have no choice but to go to the private sector because that's the only place where they're going to be able to find any funds. They don't have it themselves any more because of the downloading that this government is engaged in.

The question is: Does the government have a responsibility or not to look after public health? Water is a vital component of public health and this government has a responsibility but, like everything else with respect to the environment, it chooses to abdicate its responsibility, to sell off into the private sector, and instead to fund a big tax cut so those who have the most get even more in Ontario.

**Mr Baird:** The member opposite goes on at great length, and I think she tries to find the absolute worst example, 10 miles away from where this bill is, to point out something that's not in the bill, which suggests to me that she perhaps doesn't take great exception to the bill but rather wants to use the opportunity in her responsibilities to criticize the government.

She talked about this piece of legislation being part of the mega-week with respect to the redivision of responsibilities. While she says that municipalities will be taking over a degree of responsibility, she should of course also mention that the provincial government is taking education off the residential property tax base, relieving taxpayers of well more than \$5 billion worth of expenditures, something that when they were in government they suggested was a good idea.

She's not the only one who's committed to the environment. I recall she brought forward in the last year an issue of public policy with respect to the environment that I was uncommitted on. I came and I listened and I even supported it, as did a good number of my colleagues on this side of the House, and that's very, very important to mention.

She also said something I thought was rather startling: that tax cuts don't create jobs. That's a direct quote. I was surprised, because if the last five or 10 years have shown us anything it's that the more taxes are increased the less money the government brings in. The more taxes were increased, the less jobs there were in Ontario. What we're discovering since the last election is the lower the taxes the more revenue the government's bringing in, and that's something worth putting on the record.

My colleague the member for St Catharines mentioned Conrad Black. I recall Mr Black was here for the installation of the new Lieutenant Governor as one of her guests. He was sitting not a few feet from the honourable member for St Catharines, and I was disappointed he wouldn't try to avail himself of the opportunity to try to work out the differences rather than simply putting arguments forward in the House.

**The Acting Speaker:** The member for Riverdale has two minutes to respond.

**Ms Churley:** To the member for Northumberland, I don't think the member was listening to my speech, because he brought up the fact of the public money in the

bill that's required to be paid back. I spoke to that at great length last week and today, about the fact that it's peanuts, just the cost of doing business; it's a joke. The comment on some municipalities — he keeps coming back to that — overbuilding, too much capacity and then coming to the province cap in hand. I've been talking about that today and all last week. What we need is proper conservation policies, which, under OCWA, the Ontario Clean Water Agency that you have disbanded, are gone. You have no conservation policies any more.

To the member for St Catharines, thank you for bringing up my friend Conrad Black. I'm glad he was brought up today — very important.

The member for Sudbury East, thank you for bringing up the tax cut. I did bring that up time and time again.

Which brings me to the member for Nepean who says that — and it's a direct quote — I said that tax cuts didn't create jobs. Well, we'll see what Hansard says tomorrow. What I remember saying, and I'll say now to be clear, is that the tax cuts of this government have not created jobs. You have not created jobs.

1630

**Mr Bradley:** They have created chaos.

**Ms Churley:** You have created chaos, that's right, not jobs. What we're talking about here are the kinds of devastation that they're going to have on our hospitals and on our environment.

I talk quite a bit about the fact that people are terrified of job loss and jobs not being created. It's one of the reasons why you're getting away with people not paying enough attention to your environmental deregulation agenda, because people are so concerned about jobs. Either they can't get a job or all these jobs you've promised aren't happening. That's the problem we're talking about here. Let's see those jobs. We haven't seen them yet. But in the meantime I suggest that the government members listen to what's being said about this bill.

**The Acting Speaker:** Further debate?

**Mr Tony Clement (Brampton South):** It is my honour to represent my riding and my constituents of Brampton South in participating in this debate concerning Bill 107. There are a number of interesting things about this debate. It reminds me of the Shakespearian phrase, "All sound and fury signifying nothing," and I'll elaborate on that over the next few minutes.

First it should be stated for the record that municipalities already own —

**Hon David H. Tsubouchi (Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations):** You forgot, "...it is a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury." It's a metaphor —

**Mr Clement:** Thank you. The honourable member for Markham finishes the quote by saying that it was "a tale told by an idiot." I would not say that in this chamber, at least it's parenthetical to my remarks, but I thank the honourable member for Markham for completing my Shakespearian training.

Municipalities already own three quarters of the water and sewage plants in Ontario, so we are talking about 25% of the water and sewage plants that hitherto were the direct responsibility of the Ontario Clean Water



Agency. So there we go. I just wanted that to be put on the record.

**Ms Churley:** He's wrong, totally wrong. He's the idiot.

**Mr Clement:** The honourable member for Riverdale just called me an idiot. I want to thank the honourable member for Riverdale for calling me an idiot because it certainly shows the depth of her research on this particular issue. I'll get back to the issue at hand.

Mr Sterling, the honourable minister, has said in his opening statement on this particular issue that municipalities take this responsibility, running and owning three quarters of the water treatment plants in Ontario, seriously and have already demonstrated their ability to provide outstanding water and sewage treatment services to their communities, and I agree with the honourable minister on that front. Municipalities have already shown that they have the capability, the management expertise and the resources available to deliver excellent and clean water to our communities, and I agree with our minister on that.

I would also like to make it clear that under the proposed law there is an opportunity for municipalities to undergo or engage in public-private partnerships with respect to this particular issue. But in order to sell any assets they seek to sell to any private sector buyer, they first have to repay any provincial capital grants received by them since 1978. No one is talking about selling the crown jewels here. It is strictly a case of municipalities being given more of the responsibility that they already have, and if they choose to deliver the services from a different point of view, in a different way, they have to compensate the people of Ontario for their investment over a period of time.

Another point: The government is still going to ensure that public health and the environment are protected through tough standards, training and certification for the septic system installers' inspectors. This is in terms of the transfer of septic responsibilities.

I think I can say without fear of contradiction that the government of Ontario is going to return to its proper role, when it comes to water and sewage works, so that it can set the standards for the municipalities to ensure that excellent and clean water is available to all, and that it is our responsibility, as the representatives of the people of Ontario, to ensure that those standards are met, but that the way you achieve those standards are best left to the level of government that is closest to the people: the municipal governments. I think that is a more than adequate, indeed an excellent way, to divide the responsibility in this most important area.

Here's a third myth that perhaps we're exploding, the third one this afternoon. We've heard from the opposition for a number of weeks now that somehow we are veering away from the recommendations of the Who Does What commission, headed by David Crombie, and its report. Here is another example, yet another one, and there is a multitude that will be discussed over the next weeks and months, where this is in exact accordance with the recommendations of the Who Does What panel. They themselves recognized that the delivery of water and sewage services can best be done, in the interests of the Ontario people, by the municipalities, owned and oper-

ated by them, and that the appropriate and proper role of the province is indeed to set standards. So if we may explode another myth in our deliberations today, here again we are accepting the advice of the Crombie panel. In this case it makes absolute sense, we agree with them 100% and we are following through. We are doing what we said we'd do.

We believe that by devolving these responsibilities to the municipality, this will entail and produce a better and more efficient arrangement. That means delivering the service in a better way at the least cost to the taxpayer so that we can free up some resources. I think that is the best way to protect our environment. Members on the other side say protection of the environment has got to be a priority. We agree. We are freeing up some resources. We are freeing up some opportunity in terms of government time and attention so that we can focus in on protecting Ontario's natural heritage not only for our generation but for future generations. I believe in that strongly, which is why I intend to support the bill.

Another point here: There will be a continued role for the Ontario Clean Water Agency. I want to put that on the record as well. It still will be the contractee in terms of operating services. This is in total keeping with the Ontario Clean Water Agency business plan.

Members opposite raise the spectre of Margaret Thatcher at this point and say, "This is kind of a backdoor method of privatization." I want at this point to speak to that issue because there's nothing in this bill that moves that process further along. There is nothing in this bill that says this is the inevitable result of our changes. Indeed we are saying to the municipality, "Before you decide to privatize, you've got to pay back the investment over the years, at least since 1978, of the public by the Ontario government in terms of the capital cost of these projects."

At this point usually the spectre of Margaret Thatcher is raised by our friends across the way who say: "See what happened in England when it came to utility devolvement to the private sector. See how this has meant that people are starving in the streets and poor children are arriving at school both thirsty and dirty," it appears. Although I have no direct knowledge of that, I have direct knowledge of one of the key components of the changes in Britain that occurred in the utilities sector and I want to put it on the record so it is part of the debate.

Margaret Thatcher, in this particular case, and I say this without equivocation, did not act like a real free marketer when this issue was brought to the British Parliament and how it was managed. I understand my friend from Nickel Belt has some things to say about this. Perhaps we can have a scholarly debate on this.

Margaret Thatcher sold the assets to the private sector and then she guaranteed the private sector a floor price in terms of how much they could sell their water for, or what have you, to the market. Anyone who knows anything about the way markets are supposed to work knows that you don't guarantee a floor price. What will happen is that the private entrepreneur will say, "Okay, if the floor price is X, that means I've got a guaranteed price and now I will rejig my delivery of the services, in terms of cutting the fat and the duplication and ineffic-



iciency in the operation, to make sure the actual cost of production is far less than the floor price."

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The net result of that, since with a guaranteed floor price no one is going to go underneath the floor price, is that there's no competition in the industry. If the owner of the asset can deliver the service to a consumer while cutting 40% of the cost, the value of that cutting exercise will not be translated into a lower cost to the consumer, because they are guaranteed by the government a minimum floor price.

In fact, what Margaret Thatcher was doing was completely antithetical to the market. She was not being a commonsense Conservative, if I may say so, in this particular moment, and the consumers paid the price. That is exactly what happens when the state tries to meddle in the affairs of the private market. The inevitable result, as Margaret Thatcher found out to her dismay, is that the price is higher and the efficiency and the delivery of the service is lower than expected.

I'm not trying to prejudge what the municipalities might find out. My only advice to them, after seeing what a mess Margaret Thatcher made because she veered away from market principles, is: Do not guarantee a floor price to anybody. Let competition and market demand drive the price and the efficiency of the service. You are guaranteed to get better results than if the government tries to do so. Exhibit A is Margaret Thatcher's Britain.

Let me talk a little about the second part of our bill, which deals with septic systems. Septic systems will become a local service, again in complete conjunction with the Who Does What recommendation that the septic system is most appropriately delivered by municipal governments. Again we are following Mr Crombie's report to the letter. We think in this particular case it makes eminent sense, and the municipalities do not disagree.

We want to focus the role of the provincial government on developing sound environmental standards. The province is going to continue to have tough rules for septic system installation and operation to protect public health and the environment. That is the appropriate role for the government of Ontario, not to hire the inspectors and deliver the subject matter of that particular agency. It doesn't make any sense, and finally a government is acting upon a bit of common sense in this particular area.

I want to say parenthetically that even with all these changes, even as we devolve the septic system installation and operation and so forth to the municipalities, Ontario spends more on environmental protection than any other jurisdiction in Canada. Our commitment to the environment is still there; it has not diminished. In fact, I believe that by properly delineating the roles of the municipality and the roles of the province, we can actually do our job better in protecting the environment than previous governments have been wont to do.

In my view, the way we are doing the septic system approvals and the operation of the septic system is another example of how local services should be delivered by local government. I know this is a revolutionary idea: local services being delivered by local government wherever possible. That provides the account-

ability needed to the taxpayers, to the citizens receiving those local services. This makes sense throughout. We'll talk a little later, I'm sure, on another bill, about why our social services plans follow the same model. If you are going to deliver a service locally, there has to be local accountability. Otherwise, politicians — and members of this House, on either side, have been guilty of this over the years just as much as local politicians — are very adept at passing the buck, finger-pointing somewhere else: "Well, it's not really my responsibility. Even though we fund it, we don't really run it, so go talk to somebody else."

That happens all the time. We've got to stop it. We've got to provide the proper democratic accountability so that the taxpayer, the citizen receiving the services, knows who is responsible for the best possible delivery of that service and holds that person, MPP or local councillor, as accountable as our democratic system allows. That is the essence, the golden thread of all our proposals: that accountability not only gives you better services, but gives you those better services at a cost which is sustainable over the long haul and at a cost which has been approved by the taxpayer at the appropriate level.

With that I end my remarks and welcome comments from my friends.

**The Acting Speaker:** Questions and comments?

**Mr Gerretsen:** I would like to address one of the issues the member opposite addressed, and that deals with why there's only a transfer of 25% of the plants. Of course, the other 75% of the plants are already owned municipally. The reason 25% of the plants are still owned by the province, quite frankly, is because they are all located in municipalities that couldn't afford to build these kind of plants on their own. That's the simple reason.

If the Ontario government, many years ago, had not gotten involved in these programs whereby they allowed municipalities water and sewer services through the construction of plants owned and operated by the province, these municipalities never could have afforded to have these plants built with the money they were taking in themselves in tax revenue.

It's totally erroneous to say, "We've only got 25% of the plants still owned by the province, and therefore it's not such a bad thing to download them to municipalities." These are the exact, same plants that never would have been built because the municipalities themselves never would have had the tax structure within their own capacity to allow these programs to take place.

You cannot pick and choose the recommendations that Crombie brought forward. It is all a total plan. Crombie was quite clear on one aspect: that you cannot download soft costs such as the health and welfare costs that the province has done in their downloading legislation. He was talking about municipalities that basically were able to look after the hard costs involved, the hard-core services such as these municipal kind of services, but he certainly didn't intend there to be any downloading of the social services. You cannot say that Crombie says it's all right for this when, quite clearly, on the other side, he's totally against this kind of downloading.



**Mr Laughren:** It does me good as a social democrat to come into the House in the afternoon and listen to a debate — we used to deal in this Legislature with whether the level of services being given to people in the province was appropriate and who should pay for them and so forth. Now you come into the Legislature in the afternoon and the debate really is around ideology, pure and simple ideology.

As someone who is ideological myself, I don't find that offensive as long as we identify it for what it is. I've got no problem engaging in an ideological debate. I think that's very healthy. Every now and again I hear someone in the Legislature cry out, "Don't be so partisan," and I think: "Wait a minute. The whole nature of this place is to be partisan, and that's the way it should be."

I really like listening to the debate when it gets as polarized as it is around this issue. I was sitting here thinking about who the member for Brampton South reminded me of, and I thought, "He's the oldest Young Tory since Dennis Timbrell appeared on the scene." Of course, Mr Timbrell played a very meaningful role in this House and had major responsibilities in cabinet. His star has more recently gone into decline, but that's another story completely and I wouldn't want to clutter up this debate with that story.

I do look forward to taking part in this debate a little later in a more fulsome way, and I thank you for that time, Mr Speaker.

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**Mr Galt:** I'd first like to compliment the member for Brampton South for an excellent presentation. He brought out a lot of interesting points, particularly about the problem in England. I think he explained it extremely well, how they sold their assets and then guaranteed a floor price. That sounds like an NDP policy, to guarantee a floor price or put on a ceiling price. That's more their style, and I'm surprised that would have come from England. But with that explanation, it's very understandable why they ended up with all this profit and what the problem was. I thank the member for that explanation.

The empowerment, the turning of these facilities over to the local people, is what they've been asking for. They'll have the flexibility to develop what they want and be more efficient and more effective, no question. The member for Kingston and The Islands said, "The 25% that are not owned now can't afford it." I think it's kind of unfortunate if you can't afford your own sewers and water. Who else is going to benefit from it other than the people who are on the system? It's just about time that they did look after their own water and sewers. I doubt that the people in Kingston want to pay for water and sewer in Cobourg or in Campbellford or in my riding; nor do they want to pay for it in Hamilton. They're happy just to pay for their own.

That is indeed what we're proposing. The 75% that presently own it — we're going to increase that and let the other 25% take over and we are going to turn it over to them free of charge. We're not going to charge them anything for turning it over and letting them have their own operation, one which they probably should have had right from day one.

**Mr Bradley:** It was not long ago that the member's leader was calling the people who complain about this "whiners." I was quite surprised. There are some people here who have served at the municipal level. Simply because the local political representatives, elected municipally, had referred to the downloading or dumping on to the municipalities in a less than enthusiastic way, the Premier said they were whiners. I was surprised, because some of my Tory friends sit on municipal councils, and they were quite shocked to have the Premier of this province referring to them as whiners. I said I would raise it in the House for them and try to see if there was some clarification of that.

The member for Nickel Belt is quite correct in saying that we are dealing with an ideological government at this time, and he may like that. In fact, I can remember when he used to be a socialist and not just a social democrat a number of years ago; the new word is "social democrat." Nevertheless, his views have always been interesting in this Legislature, if nothing else, very interesting. He's often made some compelling speeches, and I think his two-minute intervention this time was a good caution to this government not to proceed in the direction it has chosen.

The parliamentary assistant says no one else benefits from these water and sewer systems. When sewage is discharged into the Great Lakes people are affected throughout a number of municipalities around the Great Lakes. Whether it's Erie, Superior, Ontario, Huron — any of the Great Lakes or any of the waterways — the people downstream are affected by this. That is one reason we can justify the provincial government remaining in it.

There used to be a time when the provincial government made a significant investment in clean water and sewage systems. It's abandoning that, quite obviously, in this bill.

**The Acting Speaker:** The member for Brampton South has two minutes to respond.

**Mr Clement:** I want to thank my colleagues in rotation, Kingston and The Islands, Nickel Belt, Northumberland and St Catharines, for participating with me in the debate of a very important public policy issue.

The member for Kingston and The Islands makes a very important point about how the government of Ontario probably got into this business in the first place. I'd like to assure the member opposite that the government is on record as saying it is exploring ways to help smaller municipalities meet their environmental protection and public health standards for water and sewage, and we promised to release details later on in the spring in that particular area. Perhaps we can get the honourable member's vote at that particular point.

The member for Nickel Belt in his own way has given one of these compliments, a "with friends like this, who needs enemies" kind of compliment, by congratulating me on being ideological. I was hoping to be actually not that way. Indeed, I've always been a party person and here I am calling Margaret Thatcher a socialist because I didn't think that in this particular instance she focused in on the needs of the consumer rather the needs of the special interest, in this case the business interest perhaps.



In fact, this bill is not predicated on ideology. I should say this for the record. It is predicated on the view that the best way to achieve democratic accountability and the best services at the best possible price for the taxpayer is to start to disentangle the web of government that has been the mark of Ontario governance in this particular area. We think local governments can do it better than we can. Crombie agreed. We are following through with our commitment.

**The Acting Speaker:** Further debate?

**Mr Joseph Cordiano (Lawrence):** I've been amusing myself this afternoon by listening to the speeches that we're hearing and it's quite amusing to hear an ideologue stand up and say: "Well, I'm not really ideological. I'm really much more pragmatic than that."

My colleague the member for Nickel Belt was right when he claimed that the member for Brampton South is beginning to pattern himself after a former member of this House, Dennis Timbrell, who was the great pragmatic Conservative of his day. Indeed, if that's what the member is doing, he's moving further away from his own colleagues. Is this a new development here in the caucus? We'll find out as that story unfolds.

There have been a number of allusions made to Britain and its experience. I'm happy to report that in Britain they've come to see the light. In fact they're just about ready to throw the Tories out of office, which would be quite an interesting development. I know the election hasn't been held yet but every indication, every sign seems to suggest that the Tories will no longer be in power in Great Britain. The election hasn't been held, it's certainly some way away, but I think there is a new era beginning to unfold in the UK and certainly that may take hold in the rest of the western world, in the democracies, in parliamentary democracies in particular.

It may be a little wishful thinking on my part, but I think the people of Great Britain saw the results of having been governed by ideologically driven parliaments, ideologically driven Conservative parties, ideologically driven leaders. They've come to realize that there's a great price to be paid for moving in a direction without having all the facts laid before you, without taking into account the practical realities of a political program, a political agenda which then ends up being impossible to implement.

Someone mentioned the Common Sense Revolution and common sense being a trait of Conservatives in Ontario today. It's becoming obvious to me and it's becoming obvious to many more people that what is being proposed is actually something far different from what ends up at the other end being implemented — proposal and then ultimately what's being implemented.

Let's take this bill before us, 107, which gives the municipalities the 25% of the water and sewage plants that are now currently run by the province and still in the possession of the province, gives that ownership back to the municipalities, those 25% of the water and sewage plants that are now currently run by the province. As pointed out by my colleague, the member for Kingston and The Islands, indeed those sewage and water treatment plants were held under the ownership of the province precisely for the reason that those municipalities could

not afford the necessary and proper treatment facilities. Therefore, the province underwrote the cost and managed those treatment plants.

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In addition, what hasn't been said clearly here today is that from now on municipalities will have to conduct their own inspections. They will have to employ a whole new army of personnel to conduct inspections and to proceed with enforcement of the standards that are set. That's an additional huge cost to all municipalities. That hasn't been talked about under this legislation. How are municipalities going to cope with those additional burdens?

Ultimately, this is nothing short of a continuation of the downloading that we've seen from this government in this special session that was called by this government to do precisely that: to offload on to municipalities all of these additional burdens without adequately funding the municipalities.

What will happen? We talked about privatization. Earlier speeches referred to the potential privatization of these sewage and water treatment facilities. As was mentioned before, 75% of the facilities are currently run by municipalities, so it wouldn't be a stretch to offload on to the municipalities the other 25% that are currently held by the province. Indeed, municipalities run treatment facilities, are currently doing that. They do a great job in those municipalities that have the funding necessary to provide for that, those municipalities that have the wherewithal financially to do what has to be done.

But in those 25% of municipalities that are currently provided those services by the province that will not be the case. What will happen? They may be forced to sell these treatment plants off to the private sector because they won't financially be in a position to continue their operation. That is a practical reality; it's not one based on ideology. The fact is that they may not have the necessary capital, the necessary funding. In addition to that, the inspection and enforcement personnel required may not be adequately trained to carry out these procedures at the municipal level.

An entire additional burden is being placed on municipalities. That's a practical consideration as well. That's not something that speaks to an ideological outcome. It's simply that municipalities will not have the necessary adequate tools, financial and otherwise, to meet their obligations. This government has not provided for that. Again, this is a pattern that we're beginning to see from this current government, a pattern that repeats itself, no matter what the issue.

The legacy of this government when it comes to the environment will be one of the worst in the history of this province, because there is no doubt that when you cut one third of the staff of the Ministry of Environment and one third of the funding, you're going to leave some serious consequences, serious impacts on the environment. No one's arguing with the need to restructure, the need to make more efficient. But what's couched as being in the name of efficiency is actually real, deep cuts which eliminate really necessary services. You can't get quality for anything, whether it's education, health care or the environment, if you're going to cut as deeply as this



government has. Ultimately at the end of the day you end up with, to be sure, real problems that come from this in each community across this province.

You will begin to see as a result of the downloading, as we've said repeatedly, as my leader and the rest of our caucus have pointed out, that this is nothing short of a huge burden on municipal property taxpayers. You will see the increase in property taxes. Let there be no mistake about that: That will be the result of what this government has done with respect to the offloading.

There is no doubt that health care has suffered under this government. There are huge cuts. They are closing hospitals and there are huge cuts to medically necessary services. The lines and the queues are getting longer, not shorter.

We in our party believe these are wrong. These cuts being imposed upon community after community in this province are wrong, and they're not necessary. What's driving this is the real desire on the part of this government to have a 30% tax cut in the face of a deficit which continues, even if it means sacrificing the health care that's been provided to the people of this province.

You can't have it both ways. You can't have a high quality of life and at the same time not be able to fund it. You can't do that. Something's going to give. What's going to give ultimately — and this government is hiding its true impact — is that the property taxpayers of this province will pay more for what this government is doing, make no mistake about that, and each one of you, as backbenchers, will have to answer to the constituents in your riding as a result.

**Mr Laughren:** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I apologize to the member for interrupting, but I think I'll be doing everyone a favour when I say this. I really want to make sure I heard him clearly when he said that a Liberal can't have it both ways.

**Mr Cordiano:** It's becoming of social democrats to try and have it both ways when they call themselves both socialists and democrats. But that's another story for another day.

**Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener):** They are just taking a page out of your book.

**Mr Laughren:** No, the enemy is over there.

**Mr Cordiano:** I accept that. But I think I made myself very clear. This government, as ideologically driven as it is on the one hand, is also attempting to have it both ways. They are passing and pushing off the costs and burdens associated with their programs on to municipalities. They are the ones who will be paying. The property taxpayers of this province will be paying for this government's agenda; make no mistake about that. In the end, that will end up being the bill to property taxpayers.

Ultimately the transfer of these facilities in Bill 107 will require that these municipalities, the 25% of municipalities that currently have these facilities provided for by the Ontario government, will either privatize their facilities — because they don't have the funding necessary to keep up with their cost, the pressures will be greater — and/or they'll increase user fees. Water rates will go up. They'll have the freedom to do so. You'll pay more for water right across this province, and that will have environmentally damaging consequences. Ultimately that's

what this government is looking at. It's got to come from somewhere, and if you're lowering standards, then it's far worse for the environment. So something's going to give with respect to the transfer of these facilities.

That's the agenda of this government whether it comes to the environment, health care, education: issues and services that matter to people. This government says, "Then you should pay for it; you should pay for it additionally." It's not good enough that we've shared collectively in those costs. That's what's been the true mark and the true greatness of our province, and we've enjoyed a quality of life that has truly been the envy of the world. But we've done that through prudent management, through an understanding that by sharing those costs and by having everyone contribute to those costs and pay for them through the income tax pooling, through the general revenues of the province, whether it came to water and treatment facilities or it came to education or it came to health care, we have provided for the best quality services so that really, literally anywhere in the world looks upon us and says, "This is the place to be."

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Now they're eroding that and the environment is seriously threatened. When you cut \$200 million out of the Ministry of Environment, you are impeding their ability to do what they've done over the years.

Some streamlining had to be undertaken; there's no question about that. That's been done in the private sector. Why has it been necessary? Because we can do things more effectively and more efficiently. That's not something invented by the Conservative Party of Ontario. It's been happening around the world. There are other examples in other countries where certainly the best practices are being used in other countries and other jurisdictions. This is something that has been taken on as a result of changes in technology, changes in management structures and management procedures. These are efficiencies that need to be gained, but that's not what we're talking about here. We're talking about a wholesale change of thinking and approach towards these areas of concern that are in the public interest.

Water and water treatment is in the public interest, and this government should not forgo its responsibility to ensure, by monitoring and by enforcing drinking water quality, that the Ontario government should have a primary responsibility for ensuring drinking water safety, for ensuring that sewage facilities are not spewing out toxic waste, that sewage facilities are doing what they're supposed to do, and that at the end of the treatment there is monitoring taking place.

We have to ensure that is the case, and to suggest that municipalities right across this province will conduct enforcement and monitoring and be able to afford that — some will and some won't, but you're going to have an uneven treatment right across this province. I think that's going to cause some serious damage to the environment. It may not be noticeable today, but down the road you will have left a legacy that succeeding generations will pay for. That is cause for concern for everyone today. That is certainly something that needs to be reviewed.



I would also like to point out that the Provincial Auditor, who examined the MOEE's monitoring of drinking water in his report even before your cuts took place, even before the Tory cuts took place, suggested that there was inadequate monitoring taking place of our drinking water across this province. So when you cut \$200 million out of the budget of the Ministry of Environment and then suggest, "Don't worry; everything will be fine; our public health will be upheld; this will not affect it; the cuts won't affect it; drinking water quality is to be maintained," how are you going to accomplish that? If you don't monitor and if you don't enforce, then this is something that will be shortchanged in community after community that cannot afford to have the kind of proper enforcement and monitoring that needs to take place.

Ultimately this government is not providing the tools that are necessary for municipalities to be able to take on this responsibility. I repeat: The government is downloading on to municipalities in addition to all the other burdens that have been downloaded on to municipalities. Those municipalities, the 25% whose water treatment facilities were being provided for by the province, will now have to take on those responsibilities.

They also will have to inspect and monitor the quality of drinking water. They will have additional responsibilities when it comes to building new facilities, because under Bill 107 the province will end its annual support grants for municipal sewer and water capital projects, and this is with respect to announcements made by the previous NDP government. You're not even living up to those promises. In future the municipalities will not have the necessary funding to build new facilities, and that's a cause for concern under this legislation.

The government has wiped its hands of its responsibility for this in any regard. Ultimately this government is doing what it did on so many fronts. It is offloading on to municipalities and not providing the necessary financial tools to deal with proper inspection, proper monitoring of drinking water. That's not good for public health in the end, that's not good for the environment, that's not good for Ontario's citizens, who will be forced at some point to pay for these services in either increases in property taxes or increases in user fees.

I conclude by saying that this bill does not go far enough, does not do what I think is necessary to ensure that Ontario's drinking water is safe, that sewage and treatment facilities across this province will be monitored, that proper enforcement and inspection will take place and that these will be properly funded. You have failed on all these fronts.

I would say go back to the drawing board; go back with Bill 107. It simply does not meet the requirements of our province, the high standards we've maintained on the environmental front and the high standards we've maintained with respect to public health. That should be your priority. You are abrogating your responsibility, when it comes to Ontario's citizens, in looking out for their health, looking out for the public interest, which we've all deemed to be one that the Ontario government has throughout its history maintained. You are walking away from that responsibility and turning your back, and I think it's a shameful day.

**Ms Martel:** I want to commend the member for Lawrence on the comments he made today and I want to reinforce some of those because they are very much at the heart of what this bill is all about. You have to look at this bill within the context of how municipalities are trying to operate these days.

The fact of the matter is that you have a Conservative government that has decided it's no longer important, as it has been historically, to ensure that communities have safe drinking water, so it has decided that it will cut off any of the capital grants that used to be available from previous governments to allow particularly small communities that don't have an adequate tax base to make sure they have a system that is adequate.

Second, you have a government that has decided it's more important to offload any number of new, additional costs to municipalities than it is to ensure that the province continues to have a responsibility when it comes to social services and health care and sewer and water. You'll have any number of municipalities that as a consequence of the dump from mega-week are going to be experiencing many new, additional costs over the next number of fiscal years.

Within that context you have a debate about sewer and water, and at the end of the day any number of small communities, particularly from northern Ontario, are going to have no choice but to look to the private sector to provide the financing that is needed either to build new systems or rehabilitate existing ones. They will not be able to find the financing anywhere else. They will have no choice. For the government to try and argue that they can look at private-public sector partnerships etc, that's just a farce. Those folks are going to end up having to privatize their systems because they won't have the money because the government has cut the grant and because of the additional costs they have to assume because of downloading.

Second, it's no wonder inspections are being turned over to the municipalities. That's because this government has cut 700 staff from the Ministry of Environment and Energy as a result of its cuts, so the staff are not available any more to do those inspections. That's going to fall to municipalities. That's an additional cost. That's a responsibility the government should continue to assume.

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**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Comments or questions?

**Mr Galt:** I will respond to the member for Lawrence and some of his comments. He seemed rather worried and so did the NDP member seem rather concerned about the reductions in the ministry. It seems their only solution is to throw more money at it and that really isn't the answer. It's to work with it and come up with some better solutions.

The old Liberal philosophy seemed to be to spend and borrow and if they hadn't doubled the budget during their term and run the debt up so far, maybe we'd have a few extra dollars to work with things like the environment. But by the time they doubled the debt, it did indeed put us in some very serious trouble. I don't think maybe the Liberals quite listened to the taxpayers out there being



really concerned about what they were having to pay in education tax on the property tax. We have listened and we plan to remove it.

I heard a lot about the 30% tax cut and it's unfortunate that you weren't here when I responded to the member for St Catharines the other day, but I just hope, as the Liberals, you keep talking about the tax cut because it's reminding the public out there that they do have more money in their pockets. During the Christmas period I had to go around and apologize to my Liberal friends for all the traffic jams that were occurring in the shopping malls. That's how the economy has been stimulated: record sales.

You just heard last week about the significant increase in revenues from taxes which continuously went down during the previous government's term. As they kept raising taxes, revenue kept falling. It's great to hear you worried about increases of municipal taxes. It just does my heart good to hear a Liberal worried about a tax increase. I think we have really won the battle. I think we've really won it when I can listen to a Liberal worried, actually worried, that there might be some tax increases someplace. You people, both sides over there, have stood for tax increases —

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

**Mr Gerretsen:** Every time the member for Northumberland gets up on this bill, he just provokes the House more and more. I would just ask him a very simple question: If this is such a good deal for the municipal taxpayers and for the municipalities, why are you forcing it on municipalities? Why don't you make it optional? If they think it's such a good deal, they'll all gladly join in the program.

This bill here basically forces municipalities, even those municipalities that may be saddled with high servicing costs on plants that may have been built within the recent past etc, to own these facilities. If it's such a good deal, why don't you just make it optional and allow the municipalities and the taxpayers to decide for themselves whether they want to be part of this program? Of course, the reason is, they don't want it. They want the system to continue the way it is right now.

It's all right for you to say all the taxpayers or all the people in these smaller municipalities should be paying for their own water and for their own water plants, but a number of these plants never would have been built because the local communities simply wouldn't have had the tax base to allow them to raise enough money to pay for these installations. It's as simple as that.

If you take that argument, then I suppose we shouldn't be building roads up to isolated communities or there should be many other services that the province shouldn't be involved in because those local taxpayers aren't actually paying for those services. Government, after all, is an obligation by society as a whole to look after those parts of our communities that simply don't have the ability to look after themselves, whether we're talking about physical communities in this case or whether we're talking about the more vulnerable people in our society. That's what government is all about, and you are destroying that notion with this kind of a bill. Make it optional.

**Mr Laughren:** I wanted to commend the member for Lawrence for his comments on this bill. I particularly enjoyed the exchanges after he had sat down.

The speeches of the member for Northumberland are just a tad lacking in grace and civility, I've noticed. Not that that bothers me, of course, because I think what you give you get in this assembly. But I must say that the member for Kingston and The Islands, I believe, hit the nail right on the head when he talks about the role of government and what kind of people will be left out if you simply say, "We're moving to a system of user-pay." That's basically the philosophy underlying this bill and a lot of other things as well: "Let the user pay." That's fine if you happen to have the money to do that.

I remember one time someone once said that in small towns it's very difficult. He referred to them as one-horse towns, and he said, "There's nothing wrong with living in a one-horse town as long as you own the horse."

It seems to me that what the member for Northumberland is saying is: "You're on your own out there, folks. Pay what you can, and if you can't pay, then do without the service," because that's what it leads to. I know there are communities in my own constituency where, if there had not been government grants for sewer and water projects, there still to this day would not be a communal water supply nor a communal sewage disposal system, and in some of those cases, the water table was polluted to start with.

I don't know what the member for Northumberland thinks the solution is in a small community where there's virtually no tax base and a polluted water supply.

**The Speaker:** Response; the member for Lawrence.

**Mr Cordiano:** I welcome the comments, especially from the member for Nickel Belt. What has to be stated here with respect to this proposition, as has been repeated time and again, is that what this government is offering is ultimately not what it's cracked up to be; what you're getting in return is a lot less than you thought. When you talk about a tax cut, on the one hand you get a tax break from the province which amounts to a few dollars per paycheque per individual, while on the other side you're getting a huge property tax increase which they haven't told anybody about. It's coming.

What this government suggests will be the end result is certainly the opposite of what they've suggested. The hidden agenda is user fees, additional costs which come out of the pockets of individuals.

You happen to believe that, happen to believe that's the better way to go, but what you're denying and what you're throwing away completely is what we've done over countless governments of different stripes. Conservative governments of the past that were far more progressive saw the wisdom of keeping in the public domain things like water and sewage, things like safe drinking water, health care, education, keeping those in the hands of the province so the public interest was served, making sure there was a collective way of paying for those services.

Progressive Conservative governments of the past did that. You are doing an about-face on that. You're denying all of that, and you're also throwing away and undermining our quality of life. You are walking away from that.



You are jeopardizing that quality of life by undermining the sustainability of those programs.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley):** Further debate?

**Mr Laughren:** I am pleased to be able to make a small contribution to the debate this afternoon on Bill 107, An Act to enact the Municipal Water and Sewage Transfer Act, 1997, and to amend other acts with respect to water and sewage.

I must say, I wanted to get into this debate because of my own experience in my own constituency of Nickel Belt, north and west of Sudbury, where there are very many small communities, reasonably remote communities and communities with not very much of a tax base. I can tell you, if the new rules had applied to those communities, there would have been and would continue to be very serious health problems in those communities.

I can name one community just as an example, a little community called Gogama, which is about 120 miles north of Sudbury in my own constituency, where there were a couple of serious spills. One was a gasoline spill that leaked from tanks into the water table, and another was a spill of some industrial chemical from the railway that ran through there. The water table became terribly polluted, and that small community of some 500 people or so simply could not have put in an expensive sewer and water system to look after the polluted water table. They simply could not have done it. There had to be assistance from a senior level of government where the tax base is much broader. This government would have given the back of the hand to that community.

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I would remind this Tory government that it was Tory governments that put most of these programs in place — it wasn't Liberal or NDP, because for so many years it was the Tories in office — so when you turn the clock back, you're turning the clock back on programs and institutions that your own party created, for all the right reasons.

Do you really think it's a coincidence that sewer and water programs have been subsidized by the province? Do you think that was some wild and crazy socialist or Liberal idea? No. That came up through the Tory government when they were in office. Do you really think that our own liquor distribution system, called the Liquor Control Board of Ontario, is a wingy idea from the opposition parties? Not at all. It came up through the Tories. Do you think Ontario Hydro is a crazy system and should be privatized as well? Where do you think that began?

You can shake your finger and point your fist at the opposition all you like, but most of those programs and services were started by Tory governments many years ago. Sure, the two opposition parties made changes to them, improved them and so forth — that's their role — when they became the government.

**Mr Wettlaufer:** But Floyd, just because the Tories brought them in doesn't mean they were necessarily good. We're willing to accept that they need to be revised.

**The Acting Speaker:** Order, please. Member for Nickel Belt, go ahead.

**Mr Laughren:** I appreciate the interjection from the member for Kitchener. I agree with him. I agree with the member for Kitchener: Just because a Tory does something doesn't mean it's good. I agree with you totally. There's nothing inherently good about what Tories do. I agree with the member for Kitchener completely.

I would just say that there's an underlying philosophy in this government, or an ideology, as I said earlier, that's driving this agenda. It's got nothing to do with better provision of services to the people of this province, absolutely nothing: It's bottom-line politics and that's the beginning and the end of it. It may make these Tories feel good to have an agenda that's driven that way, but I don't think at the end of the day it will give us a better province. I fundamentally don't believe that.

*Interjections.*

**Mr Laughren:** I know some of the Tories are getting up on their hind legs. I don't mind that, because it's good to have them engaged in the debate this afternoon. I'm glad there are as many of them here as there are; I appreciate their attendance here. But I can tell you that what you're doing is being driven by the wrong motivation — not that I would ever attribute motives; I just say that their motives are wrong.

I think most people understand very clearly that as these services and facilities are downloaded on to the municipalities and as the grants are cut to municipalities for the provision of these services, the government will simply stand back and watch what happens and watch it all unfold.

There'll be a lot of to-ing and fro-ing before this story is finished, I can tell you, because it's patently transparent that what's happening here is basically a two-pronged strategy. One is to download. That's what's really driving it. You and I know that when they take education costs off the property tax and put other facilities and services on it — which in itself doesn't bother me; it's the amount you put back on when you take the educational services off. If there was an even exchange there, you wouldn't have very many people upset about what you're doing, but when you have such a preponderance going down to the municipalities compared to what you're taking off, that's what's going to make people upset when they see what's happening to their tax bills.

Sewer and water services are no different. I and my colleague from Sudbury East met with the regional municipality of Sudbury people last Friday and went through the numbers with them as carefully as they could do them. They have no hidden political agenda at the region. We went through all those numbers, including sewer and water downloads, and at the end of the day it looks as though there's going to be, in one community called the regional municipality of Sudbury, \$105 million of extra costs to be assumed by that municipality. If I could translate that into a property tax, that would double property taxes in the region, and that will not be accepted.

I've heard the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Municipal Affairs talk about these funds that are being set up.

**Mr Gerretsen:** It's a \$10-billion fund now.



**Mr Laughren:** Yes, the lineup for that money is going to be awe-inspiring. There will be an incredible lineup for that, because you cannot do that to people. You cannot do it and you won't get away with it. You will simply not get away with it.

When it comes to water, it should be something that's not driven by the profit motive, it seems to me, just the same way as when Hydro became a nationalized institution back in I think it was 1906 under the Tory government of the day. They ran an election on it, they won the election on it and they brought it in. It was supported hugely across the province. Just as I feel that way about hydro, I feel that way about water as well.

It really bothers me to hear the member for Northumberland, who's turning out to be quite a spokesperson for the government on a lot of right-wing issues it seems, when he stands in his place and says that people should pay their own way, or words to that effect — I don't want to put words in his mouth. I want to tell you that would impose very serious problems in some communities. If he took that same philosophy on health care, I know what kind of health care he'd build in this system. If he took the same philosophy on education, I can imagine the education system we'd have in this province. Or, as somebody else said — I think it was the member for Kingston and The Islands — about roads going to small communities, that would be a ridiculous scenario. Yet that's the picture the member for Northumberland is painting for us.

When it comes to the provision of water and sewer services, public health has to be the major concern, with the affordability to people the secondary concern, because public health is, of course, more important than anything else. But as well there's conservation. The member for Riverdale made the comment about conservation. Can you imagine any serious conservation program when the people running the water supply services need to make a profit, and in order to make a profit, the more water they sell the more money they'll make? It's a totally transparent motivation on the part of the private sector. I understand that, but surely we have to think about it when we're dealing with a program where conservation should be an important ingredient.

There's nothing mysterious about what the Tories are doing with this bill in transferring responsibility for plants to the municipal level. I can see it happening now. They'll transfer all these sewer and water services to the municipal level, then OCWA will be left there with nothing to do except manage the system or look after the system; they won't have any ownership role to play any more. At that point OCWA will be privatized — they'll be put out for bids — so that will be out of the public sector. Then as the municipalities increasingly feel the pressure of this downloading that's going on, they will start privatizing their water supply system.

I did some reading on what happened in Great Britain as well, and those are truly horror stories. It's fine for the member for Brampton South to rise in his place and start making excuses for what happened in Great Britain, but I can tell you it was done for the same reason you are doing it, to privatize for the sake of privatization. That's what they did in Great Britain under Thatcher. For the

member for Brampton South to say that Thatcher was a socialist because she privatized the water supply I find passing strange, but anyway, some day perhaps he can explain that all to us.

But the horror stories in Great Britain are real, they're very, very well documented. I wanted to put on the record some people's feelings about this bill and what's happening to sewer and water services. Members will be aware of the Ontario Municipal Water Association, who provide services. They're hardly a group that is known for government-bashing. This is what they had to say. This is dated December 3, 1996, so about two months ago:

"We believe the government is opening the floodgates to the irreversible deterioration of water services in Ontario," said Don Black, the executive director of OMWA. "It's a situation that is transforming Ontario's reliable and safe water service into one marked by chaos and fragmentation. The government clearly has no plan to safeguard our drinking water and to ensure the high quality, low-cost and reliable water system we enjoy today."

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It goes on, quoting from the Ontario Municipal Water Association: "Instead, the Ontario government is paving the way for privatization, where private operators have profit, not customers, as their prime concern. Municipalities will be further squeezed by reduced transfer payments so they may be forced to cross-subsidize other services with water revenues. This can create an incentive for municipalities to make up lost revenues through hidden taxes in water rates."

That's not the opposition party saying that to you to score political points; that's the Ontario Municipal Water Association who are saying that, and I think you should be listening to them.

There were some polls done about privatization of water supply, and it's been mentioned before in the debate. But this was the question that was put to Ontario citizens: "In your opinion, who should control a community's drinking water system: directly elected municipal officials or private business?" This is a legitimate poll, and guess what: 76% said municipal officials, elected people, should control a community's drinking water system; 19% said private business; 6% said they didn't know. So 76% to 19%.

Who are you folks listening to? Who are you listening to over there? If it's not just seeking a bottom line for somebody, what is it? People don't want it. If you've got polls that show differently than this, I'd like to see them. I wish you'd stand up and tell me what they are. If you think the people in the province want a privatized water system, say so. Where do you get your information? That was a legitimate poll, it seems to me.

I don't want to spend too much time on the Great Britain scene, but it is so strikingly similar to what you people are doing that I really feel I must draw it to your attention. The Canadian Environmental Law Association, which many of you will know of, had this to say: "Since the water and sewage industries were privatized in England and Wales in 1989, citizens have suffered a litany of problems. Monopoly public enterprises have



turned into scandal-plagued private monopolies. Britain has experienced severe water shortages and soaring water rates, up to 450% increases. Since 1989, there's been a 600% rise in dysentery, a 200% rise in hepatitis A, a significant increase in other gastrointestinal diseases related to water shortages and dramatic increases in pollution offences by these companies."

If you've got evidence that runs contrary to this, if the government has evidence of jurisdictions which are privatizing the water supply and have made it healthier, made the distribution system more efficient, please tell us: What are they? Table the reports, or at least, when you stand up to speak on this bill, bring forth that information. Don't just stand up and repeat a mantra that somebody's given you that private enterprise can do it better than public enterprise. That's not good enough. That's not good enough for the people of this province. You owe them more than that. If you've got evidence as to why a privatized water system would be better than the present system, tell us what it is and we'll listen to you and we'll have an intelligent debate on that. But for you to stand up and just simply rant and rave about how a privatized system will be better than the present system makes no sense whatsoever, and you're doing a disservice to your constituents and to the province.

I was reading in one of the British papers some national news report, and this is what they had to say about Great Britain again: "An industry whose companies continually end up in court for pollution offences, that underinvests in research and development and does not meet society's expectations for standards of service will not only alienate customers but also shareholders of the 21st century."

I could go on and on and on about what's happening in Great Britain, but I want to tell you that what they're doing there — despite the fact that the Tories here are trying to dismiss what happened in Great Britain, saying it's not the same, it is the same. The same motivation that drove Thatcher is driving Mike Harris and the Tories in this province.

I hope the Tories have thought this one through. When they download and encourage privatization, both of the facilities and of OCWA, the umbrella body, I hope they understand what the potential problems could be.

For a long time now in this province we've talked about preventing water diversion to the United States. We've fought very hard as Canadians, not just in this chamber but elsewhere, to prevent water diversion. But I can tell you, as soon as you get into the privatization field, it's going to be irresistible for these companies to start lobbying and engaging in water diversion programs. Some of the projects that people have in mind are absolutely incredible: reversing the natural flow of water to the north back to the south and into the US. I want to tell you, that's not the solution to a water shortage in another country. I hope the government understands that, because it is a very dangerous one.

I hope as well that this government will listen to people across the province. Right now I haven't heard of a commitment for public hearings on this bill. I don't know whether there are going to be public hearings, but I think it would be outrageous not to have public hearings

on a public policy matter as important as this. You really are standing tradition on its head when you privatize sewer and water facilities in this province, so I hope you will seriously consider and provide adequate public hearings across the province on this bill. There's so very much at stake.

I do want to talk for a moment about what the results of privatizing would be. I'm thinking of OCWA for a moment. Think of OCWA: I don't think the population at large really has a good sense of the Ontario Clean Water Agency. It was only created in 1993 by the previous government. I think a lot of people don't see it; it's not terribly visible out there. There are I think 800 employees who work for OCWA. They operate sewage treatment plants and — what they own serves almost three million people in sewage treatment and almost two million in water filtration plants, so they are a big player out there in servicing sewer and water for the province.

I am very concerned that as the government goes full speed ahead without really thinking the long-run implications through, we as a province will regret very much what you've taken on here. I think what you're reacting to is simply a knee-jerk ideological motivation, and that's fundamentally wrong. I ask that you think about everything you've talked about privatizing. Water is one of them and sewage treatment is another. But there are those other institutions in the province as well, and I'm thinking, as I mentioned before, of LCBO, TVO and Ontario Hydro.

Think about what you're saying to the people of the province. What you're saying to the people of the province — and I include the ramifications of this bill in this regard — is, "We're no longer going to provide these services to you at cost." That was Hydro's mandate, to provide energy at cost. Same thing for the Liquor Control Board: "We're no longer going to provide things to you at cost. We're going to provide them at cost plus a profit for the private sector." That's what you're saying, and I don't for a moment think that's what the people in this province are seeking from you.

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I repeat again that I'm waiting to hear from members of the government party why they're doing this and where the examples are of how it has worked so well. Show me where it's worked well when hydro is privatized, when water services are privatized. Where has it worked so well? I haven't seen it.

**Mr Tom Froese (St Catharines-Brock):** Has the other 75% been privatized? No.

**Mr Laughren:** The member for St Catharines-Brock says: "What about the other 75%? It hasn't been privatized." The downloading is just starting, my friend. If you really think that the municipal level can absorb the amount of downloading that's taking place, then you must have a very rich municipality. I sure don't. I know the people in the regional municipality of Sudbury would not be happy if they were to see their property taxes double, if they were to see that. I don't think that can happen — I think there would be an uproar in the province that you couldn't control — but that means then at some point you're going to have to come back into the game with subsidies for sewer and water that you're now



trying to get rid of. That's what you're trying to do: get rid of all the capital grants so you won't have to have provincial support. You're going to have to get back into the game.

What are you going to do when there's a serious health problem in a community, the example of the one I started speaking with about 20 minutes ago? That is going to happen. There are going to be problems in water tables and you're going to have to do something about it. You're going to be running from pillar to post making ad hoc policy decisions as you go. It's ridiculous. You're turning the clock back and you're not providing a better service to the people of the province — excuse me.

**Mr Gerretsen:** It must be the water. It's already happening.

**Mr Laughren:** It's the water that's getting to me. I sometimes think that the policy wonks in the government must live in large, assessment-rich municipalities to be endorsing a bill like this — the policy wonks; I'm not saying all the MPPs. They are obviously from all over the province, God help us; we know that. You must come from a different kind of municipality than I live in, because the municipalities that are in my constituency cannot absorb the kind of downloading you're imposing on them, and sewer and water services are just another example. That's why I'm so worried about privatization being the next step. Even if you don't do it, even if the government doesn't do it, the municipalities will because of the pressures on their bottom line because of your downloading. That's what the game plan is here.

You'll satisfy yourselves in a couple of ways. You'll scratch yourselves where you itch very nicely because you'll be getting your ideologically driven agenda of privatization in place; and second, you'll be sloughing off costs to another level of government, namely, the municipal level.

**Mr Baird:** You really believe that?

**Mr Laughren:** I really believe that. If you don't believe that, come to my municipality, come to the regional municipality of Sudbury and ask them what the results will be of downloading. Ask them. Don't take my word for it. Go and talk to them. Go and talk to the other municipal governments as well. It's not just —

*Interjection.*

**Mr Laughren:** I was hoping to conclude my remarks with a flourish, but I think I'd better not, lest I wake up some members in the chamber.

*Interjection.*

**Mr Laughren:** As a matter of fact, my colleague from Sudbury East reminded me what a former Tory MPP and cabinet minister said. Now he's the mayor of the city of Sudbury, Mr Jim Gordon, and he said he understood what was going on all right. I think he understands the Tory mind better than I do. As a matter of fact, I know he does. What Jim Gordon said — and some of you will know Jim Gordon as a prominent Tory. The member for

Etobicoke-Lakeshore certainly knows the former member from Sudbury named Jim Gordon, now the mayor. He said that all of this downloading on his town — because he recognizes what's happening to his municipality — is driven by the tax cut and it's baloney. That's what he said. This is a loyal, true blue Tory telling you that it's baloney and he sees through it. It's all being driven by the tax cut. You know it is and I know it is.

Can you imagine the kind of services you would be able to deliver to the people of this province if you were not doing the tax cut? About \$5 billion a year worth, that's all. You could have taken it away from the deficit, reduced the deficit by that amount every year — \$5 billion. I'm not saying you had to spend it. If you're so hung up on the deficit, why are you borrowing money to implement the tax cut?

*Interjections.*

**Mr Laughren:** Well, that's what you're doing.

**The Acting Speaker:** Order, please. Come to order.

**Mr Laughren:** There's a very good-sized herd of Tories in here this afternoon and they're all up on their hind legs because they don't like being challenged on the Common Sense Revolution, especially by a Tory by the name of Mr Jim Gordon from Sudbury. He understands what this bill is all about. He understands it very well.

I look forward to this debate continuing, but there are a couple of points I'd like to make before I sit down.

One is that I want members to stand and make a commitment to public hearings on this bill. It's an important bill. I want to hear the Tories standing up and saying they too want public hearings. I haven't heard them say that. They just get up and do an ideological rant, unlike the thorough, reasoned analysis that we on this side give to all the bills. So one thing I'd like to hear a commitment on is public hearings.

What else I'd like to hear from the speakers who still will be speaking are ones who will tell us why they're doing this and where the examples are around the world of how this has worked so well.

I'm really pleased that the Minister of Environment is in here today as one of the chief policy wonks of the government.

**Mr Baird:** He's one of the neo-con whiz kids.

**Mr Laughren:** He's a neo-con whiz kid. That's correct. He's the one who's trying to drive the privatization agenda. But, of course, it has started to flounder a bit so they appointed a minister responsible for privatization. Somebody had to privatize all of those institutions and services that former Tory governments had brought into the public sector.

**The Acting Speaker:** It being almost 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 1:30 of the clock tomorrow, and I can assure the members that we will follow up with questions and comments tomorrow.

*The House adjourned at 1758.*



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LA 20N  
X1  
D23



No. 160

N° 160

ISSN 1180-2987

**Legislative Assembly  
of Ontario**

First Session, 36th Parliament

**Assemblée législative  
de l'Ontario**

Première session, 36<sup>e</sup> législature

**Official Report  
of Debates  
(Hansard)**

**Journal  
des débats  
(Hansard)**

**Tuesday 11 February 1997**

**Mardi 11 février 1997**



**Speaker**  
Honourable Chris Stockwell

**Président**  
L'honorable Chris Stockwell

**Clerk**  
Claude L. DesRosiers

**Greffier**  
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# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 11 February 1997

# ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 11 février 1997

*The House met at 1331.  
Prayers.*

## MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

### HOTEL DIEU HOSPITAL

**Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines):** An overflow crowd at the Local 199 Canadian Auto Workers' hall last Thursday evening informed the local hospital restructuring committee in no uncertain terms that they want to see the Hotel Dieu Hospital remain open and continue to provide the excellent care that it has for so many years to Niagara residents.

Patients, doctors, nurses, ambulance attendants and others who care passionately about high-quality health care in Niagara made compelling cases against the recommendation to close the Hotel Dieu and shared with the committee their experiences with the caring, concerned hospital.

They also remembered the Premier's promise of the last election campaign when he said, "Certainly it is not my plan to close hospitals." They were also concerned about privatization of services as they saw ambulance services being dumped on the municipalities, and today we learn that a giant US ambulance service is moving into Ontario by forming a new company with seven privately run services already here, including one in Port Colborne.

Rural/Metro is the second-largest ambulance provider in the United States. The company provides emergency services to more than 200 communities. This will be the first expansion into Canada.

"The province should intervene now and not let the deal go through," said Henry Bosch, whose local represents ambulance attendants out of the Hotel Dieu Hospital. "It definitely wouldn't be right to bring a US corporation into Canada," and I agree.

### HOSPITAL RESTRUCTURING

**Mr Len Wood (Cochrane North):** Today I want to talk about the hospital cuts. On January 31 the Minister of Health proudly announced a major reinvestment of \$61.5 million into Ontario's health care, including \$14 million for northern hospitals. That was welcome news indeed for the hospital administrators across northern Ontario.

In Hearst, Hôpital Notre-Dame administrators were relieved at the announcement of \$180,000 for their hospital. But the day was not over yet. A few hours later, the administrators of this very same hospital were told by

this government that their operational funding would be reduced by \$614,770 for the 1997-98 fiscal year. At the same time, Timmins and District Hospital received a so-called windfall of \$829,630, but they will have their 1997-98 budget slashed by \$2.2 million.

It's the same situation in Kapuskasing, where Sensenbrenner Hospital funding will be cut by \$386,445. In the last three years, this hospital alone has seen its budget slashed by more than \$1 million. As a result, 30 nurses in Kap and Hearst are out of work, and across my riding it's close to 100 nurses who have been let go by this government. This is the very same government which promised not to cut health care spending.

Minister, your strategy is plain hypocrisy: "Let's keep the public in the dark. Let the people believe we are reinvesting money, that we care about their health care." But after almost two years of broken Tory promises, all Ontarians know by now that you put into one hand and you take more —

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Thank you.

### JESSE DAVIDSON

**Mr Bob Wood (London South):** I rise today to update the House on the success of Jesse's journey. Jesse Davidson and his dad, John, began a four-month, 3,300-kilometre trek across Ontario on May 20, 1995, to raise public awareness of genetic diseases, with a special emphasis on Duchenne muscular dystrophy which Jesse has. Their journey inspired the whole province and generated more than \$1 million for research.

Jesse's famous odyssey has now become an annual celebration; a five-kilometre fund-raising walk through London's Springbank Park on Victoria Day.

The Foundation for Gene and Cell Therapy has announced the creation of post-doctoral research fellowships in the name of Jesse Davidson, a new funding partnership with the Medical Research Council of Canada and a fund-matching agreement with the MRC.

Later today in London, Jesse launches two significant research initiatives with funds generated by his journey. On behalf of the foundation, Jesse will present multi-year funding for specific laboratory studies aimed at a cure for a genetic disease which affects 15,000 North American boys like himself.

I ask all members of the House to join me in congratulating the outstanding efforts of Jesse Davidson.

### ISSUES IN WINDSOR AND ESSEX COUNTY

**Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor-Sandwich):** Lately, the strangest thing has happened in Windsor and Essex county: We have had an absolute barrage — no, a



parade — of ministers from the Ontario cabinet trucking their way down to Windsor, and you wonder if there's a by-election in the offing. May I say that over the last couple of weeks we've had no end of ministers who want to come and grace us with their presence in Windsor-Essex county.

I must say that when the ministers are on their scripts, they're fair, but the moment they decide to open to question and answer, it's an absolute disaster.

**Hon Al Palladini (Minister of Transportation):** Not one question.

**Mrs Pupatello:** No matter what minister comes down, the one question they're asked is, "What about our health care?" Our Minister of Transportation knows this full well, and the worst part was, you didn't have an answer.

I personally would like to invite the Minister of Health to come down to Windsor-Essex county, not just any time but in the very near future. This Thursday, we have a town hall in the auditorium of Windsor Western Hospital Centre, where this government is forcing the closure of our emergency unit before any other services for emergency are available to pick up the slack.

I welcome the Minister of Health to come to Windsor. I want him in that auditorium. The people in Windsor-Essex deserve that. We don't want this parade of any old minister; we want the health minister and we want him in Windsor this Thursday at 7:30 pm.

**Mr Derwyn Shea (High Park-Swansea):** Yes, the federal Minister of Health. Let's get him there. I'm with you.

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** The members for High Park-Swansea and Brampton North, please come to order.

**Mr Shea:** You couldn't see my lips move.

**The Speaker:** I didn't see your lips move but I heard your voice.

Statements, member for Etobicoke-Humber. Oh, I'm sorry, Member for Etobicoke-Humber. I apologize. I got out of order there. I was distracted. Member for Riverdale.

*Interjection.*

**The Speaker:** They'll work the clock.

#### MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

**Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale):** I attended another very large mass meeting last night against the megacity in Toronto. There seemed to be about 2,000 people there.

I want my constituents in Riverdale to know there's lots of activity right here in Riverdale. Jack Layton, Peter Tabuns and I have held two meetings already, with large turnouts, and I want people to know that on Thursday, February 13, there are two very important meetings happening in Riverdale. At 6 o'clock at Frankland school there is a meeting of people. Parents and other interested people are coming together to talk about how to fight Bill 104, the education bill. At 7:30 there's another big anti-megacity meeting. People can come if they have questions, because some of the Tory propaganda is working on some people. If you have some questions, come out and ask. It's going to be very exciting. Moxy Frivious, a well-known band — three of the four members are good

friends of mine and live in Riverdale — will be there to open, and I believe Arlene Mantel is going to sing a few songs at the end.

I should not forget to mention that tonight in East York I will be attending a meeting. I believe John Parker, the member for East York, will be at that meeting tonight as well. It's going to be at Bennington Heights public school. It starts at 7:30. I look forward to —

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Thank you.

1340

#### GEORGE CHUVALO

**Mr Douglas B. Ford (Etobicoke-Humber):** As a member of this Legislature, I rise today to recognize a constituent in Etobicoke who was recently distinguished by B'nai Brith Canada for his community service, Mr George Chuvalo.

Known in this country as a boxing champion, he is also a champion of a different kind. As a result of tragically losing loved ones, he has taken it upon himself to educate today's youth about the terrible world of drug abuse. Last week Mr Chuvalo received B'nai Brith Canada's National Community Service Award. The award is in recognition of his strength and determination of character and courage in overcoming his personal tragedy.

By speaking out and educating young Canadians about the dangers of drug abuse, George Chuvalo has reached out to the hearts and minds of our youth.

I know the Minister of Correctional Services has expressed appreciation to Mr Chuvalo about his interest in bettering the lives of others and welcomed a presentation to those under the ministry's supervision.

I too am grateful to Mr Chuvalo for the contribution he is making towards improving the livelihood and future of young Canadians. It is commendable that the B'nai Brith has recognized George Chuvalo for his work in the community. I ask that members of this Legislature show how much we appreciate his efforts as well.

#### TVONTARIO

**Mr Michael Gravelle (Port Arthur):** I'm pleased to rise in the Legislature today to announce that the Ontario Liberal caucus strongly supports maintaining our educational network, TVOntario, as a publicly owned and funded broadcaster.

We all believe that Ontarians are proud of TVO/TFO, and the extraordinary response it continues to receive during its membership drives is a strong reflection of that support. Some 70% of the award-winning network's programming is composed of quality non-commercial educational and children's programs. Meanwhile TVO continues to increase self-generated revenues, reduce administrative costs, increase membership sales, develop private sector partnerships and move towards making elements of its program day self-financing.

Our Liberal caucus supports those moves and recognizes that their continued effort to reduce their dependence on government funding should be applauded, but there is no question that TVO is an international success



story that should be publicly maintained. Over 136 countries have purchased TVO programs, and all across Canada and around the world the quality of their programming is renowned and much celebrated.

It should also be noted that TVO plays an especially important role in northwestern Ontario communities, including its role in maintaining Wawatay Native Communications from Sioux Lookout.

Unlike this government, which continues to hedge its bets for this truly public asset, my colleagues in the Liberal caucus categorically support the continuation of a publicly owned and funded TVO.

### EDUCATION REFORM

**Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma):** The Minister of Education and Training is afraid of real dialogue with the public about his massive changes to the school system in Ontario. Tomorrow the minister is expected to appear at a town hall meeting in the evening in Sault Ste Marie. The organizers, Public Education Partners, have said that questions must be submitted in writing beforehand. This format will not permit real dialogue. It's a sham.

Parents have questions about increased class sizes and other changes related to this government's cuts to education, but the education minister goes out to meet the public only when the dialogue is safely scripted. What is he afraid of?

We saw this same kind of thing two weeks ago in Toronto, when the High Park-Swansea Conservative MPP invited select participants to a meeting with the minister. Members of the local PTA and the school council were forced to crash the meeting, which was to be videotaped for use in government propaganda. There's one reason why the minister does not want to engage in real discussion: He's afraid of questions from students, parents, teachers, support staff, trustees and others who know that the Conservatives' real agenda is to get control of spending in education so they can cut another \$1 billion from education to help pay for their tax scheme for the rich.

Is the minister prepared to meet with students and others to talk in a real way about education, or not?

### STEPHANIE PARTRIDGE

**Mr Harry Danford (Hastings-Peterborough):** I wish to bring to the attention of the Legislature and all Ontarians the achievement of Stephanie Partridge of Marmora, Ontario, the silver medalist in the junior division of the Canadian National Figure Skating Championships, held in Vancouver, British Columbia. I'm sure many of the members were able to watch the championships on television this past weekend.

Stephanie Partridge, a 16-year-old from the small town of Marmora, Ontario, represented her town and the province of Ontario at this world-renowned competition. She placed first after the very difficult technical round, third after the free skate and second overall. This was Stephanie's first year of competition at the junior level and her first time at the Canadian national championships. Her superb results in this and previous competi-

tions are proof that excellence can be found and fostered in small towns and communities across Ontario.

Stephanie has been invited to attend an international invitational competition in Europe in early April, and next fall it is expected she will represent Ontario and Canada in international competitions at the world championship level.

Stephanie's family, her coaches and the community of Marmora are very proud of her accomplishments. She is also very excited about her prospects at the international level and I know that every member of this Legislature joins me in wishing her the very best in her future competitions.

### ORAL QUESTIONS

#### GOVERNMENT SPENDING

**Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition):** My question is for the Premier. Premier, with your government it's hard to tell the difference between an announcement, a trial balloon and just plain wishful thinking. On Friday your finance minister said the cuts were over and he said it was time to start spending money on health and education. You yourself, Premier, told a radio caller, upset about the conditions her grandmother faced in hospital — required that you spend more money on health care. You yourself said that.

I want to ask you, Premier, is there going to be more money for health and education? Is the cutting done? Have you finally realized that your cuts are causing harm to our students in their classrooms and our patients in their hospitals?

**Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier):** If you'd like specifics, I'll ask the Minister of Finance in subsequent questions to give you the specifics. But let me assure you of this: As we committed to in the Common Sense Revolution, as we committed to in the campaign, there have not been nor will there be any cuts to health or classroom education.

**Mr McGuinty:** I'm not sure where the Premier has been, but he has quite obviously not been inside an Ontario classroom for some time and he has not been inside an Ontario hospital for quite some time.

Let's go back to the issue I raised earlier. In Canada's largest daily, the Toronto Star, on Friday, February 7, the headlines rang out: "Government Can Start Spending Again, Eves Says." "Boom Time, Say Tories: Extra \$1.3 Billion Can Go to Cities, \$500 Million to Health, Education."

Yesterday I raised the tragic story of the conditions a man faced in an Ontario hospital during his dying days, and I find it ironic that on the same day your finance minister was saying your cuts were over, your health minister was finalizing his plans for \$435 million in new cuts to Ontario hospitals.

Can I tell the sick people in our hospitals and their loved ones that your cuts to hospitals are over, that you understand the gravity of the mistake you made and that cuts are over when it comes to hospitals?

**Hon Mr Harris:** The first thing I would tell your constituents is that you ought to listen to the Minister of



Finance, not the Toronto Star. I think they will get the straight information and the straight goods.

If you have any specific information on the finances — I think we all clearly understand where we were when we inherited from the NDP. We were spending a little more than a million dollars an hour. We have made dramatic progress: Now we're spending somewhere in the area of \$800,000 an hour more than we're taking in, so I think we all acknowledge that we have a little ways to go before we balance the books.

But let me assure you also of this: Yes, we do have some isolated cases of care in health care that we are very concerned about around the province, and this has always been the case, unfortunately. But we're doing something about it. As we make the changes that others have talked about — that your former minister talked about, the —

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Thank you, Premier. Final supplementary.

1350

**Mr McGuinty:** I want to quote from the Toronto Star of the same day:

"Eves said yesterday he believes that more money — perhaps as much as \$1.3 billion — should be spent to help municipalities cope with the transfer from the province of responsibility for the costs of welfare, social housing, transportation and other services.

"And about \$500 million could be used for major reinvestments in health care and education."

Here's a direct quote: "'There's no better way that the government can spend its money than to reinvest in municipal restructuring, in health care...and in education,' he said after providing a legislative committee with a fiscal update for the province."

Either the minister was misleading the media, and thereby the Ontario public, or he was very intent on ensuring that we're going to be getting more money in health care and education. I'm merely raising the question.

Premier, back to you once again. We've heard from your Minister of Finance that there is more money — there is found money, apparently — and we're going to stop cutting money to hospitals and we're going to stop cutting money for education. Can you confirm what it is that we're looking at here? Ontarians want to know what's happening.

**Hon Mr Harris:** Instead of all the speculation, let's go to the source himself, the Minister of Finance.

**Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance):** I'd be more than pleased to answer the question of the leader of the official opposition. His members who were in the committee, Mr Kwinter and Mr Phillips, and everybody who was in the committee will know exactly what I said, and what I said was that because we have approximately \$1.2 billion more in revenue this year than we anticipated, we have now decided to increase the restructuring fund from \$900 million to \$1.8 billion. Of that \$1.8 billion, we have already allocated \$1.3 billion. I didn't say we had an additional \$1.3 billion; I said we've already allocated \$1.3 billion in this fiscal year. That leaves us with another \$500 million approximately with which we have something to do in the way of restructuring between now and March 31.

Yes, there would be no better way to spend some of that restructuring money than to look at health care restructuring, education restructuring and municipal restructuring in the province. That is what I said last Thursday, and that's —

**The Speaker:** Thank you, Minister of Finance. New question; Leader of the Opposition.

**Mr McGuinty:** I have a question for the Minister of Environment and Energy, Speaker. He's on the list to be present.

**The Speaker:** We'll stand it down? New question; third party.

## MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

**Mr Tony Silipo (Dovercourt):** My question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. The minister has made it very clear that the only thing that will stop his megacity steamroller is if people making presentations at the committee come up with new reasons this megacity, mega-taxes approach is not the right way to go.

I've been at the hearings and I'm happy to say that there have been literally dozens of such reasons presented in forceful, convincing and moving presentations from the people of our community.

The minister, I know, has been at some of the hearings and I understand that he's watched the rest on videotape, so I think it's appropriate to hear his reactions to some of those presentations.

I want to start with Professor Peter Russell, a leading expert on the Canadian Constitution. I particularly found Professor Russell's presentation on the constitutional implications very thought-provoking. What was the minister's reaction?

**Hon Al Leach (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing):** As we have continued to say, we believe the hearings into this process are extremely important and we are paying a lot of attention to them. The member's absolutely correct: I have attended the hearings three times personally and I have watched every session on videotape at home. Many of the presentations have provided a lot of good information, a lot of very thoughtful input into the process, and as we have said, we're sure there will no doubt be some amendments made to this bill as a result of all the changes that have been proposed.

Of course all the members opposite would recognize that there hasn't been a bill, I don't think, ever go through this House that didn't have amendments, and this one certainly won't be any different.

**Mr Silipo:** The question was, what did the minister think of Professor Russell's constitutional arguments? Let me just summarize the argument Mr Russell presented when he concluded, because the minister obviously has forgotten it, to be kind to him, "I hope that those whom we have elected to govern Ontario for a few years will feel bound by a deeper constitutional obligation to respect the legacy of democratic municipal government that has taken generations to develop," of which Mr Russell, among others, feels you're in the process of dismantling. That's the argument he was making.

We could explore more of his argument, but let's move on to someone the minister might pay more attention to:



William Archer, a former Tory municipal councillor and a member of the minister's own Progressive Conservative riding association. Mr Archer told the committee, "This legislation is full of errors, both major and minor." Incidentally, one of the errors he pointed out is that in the schedule that lists the ridings on which the new boundaries are to be based, you've left out Broadview-Greenwood.

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Question.

**Mr Silipo:** He also said the legislation contained serious gaps. Do you have any explanation for these serious errors and gaps, Minister?

**Hon Mr Leach:** Mr Archer also wrote to me directly and I'm well aware of his comments. I don't want to get into the comments of the individuals who were involved, other than to say that everybody who's appearing at the committee is doing so in a very forthright manner and making sure their views are known.

There were two minor errors in the drafting of the legislation. One riding that is within Metro was omitted and a riding that is outside — York North, I believe — was added inadvertently. That will be corrected by amendment when the bill comes back.

**Mr Silipo:** If the minister wasn't in such a rush, mistakes like this and more significant ones than that might not have taken place.

**Mr Archer,** who incidentally himself studied the restructuring of municipal government in Niagara and talked about the process of time needed to do that effectively, went on to say, "One wonders if the purpose of this legislation is to get rid of some political representatives who have views and ideas that some people don't like."

I want to go on to one other presenter. Lois Corbett from the Toronto Environmental Alliance made this interesting point: "Smaller governments, like smaller ecosystems, can do things. They can change more quickly, they can adapt more quickly, and they can respond to pressing changes in the environment."

If the minister paid any attention to the scope and variety of the presentations at the hearings, he will know that Bill 103 should not be rammed through until these issues have been carefully considered. Minister, you're watching the videotape, but are you paying any attention to what the people are saying in the hearings?

**Hon Mr Leach:** Certainly we are paying attention to what people are saying, not just in these hearings but what they've been saying for the last decade: There are too many layers of government, there is too much government, there are too many politicians, there is too much waste, there is too much duplication. That's what Bill 103 is addressing. Bill 103 proposes to reduce levels of government, it proposes to reduce the number of politicians, it proposes to reduce waste and duplication that's there at the present time. Having a single-tier local government will resolve most of the problems that are facing us in this area right now.

1400

#### HOSPITAL STAFF

**Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre):** My question is to the Minister of Health. I want to ask you about the

shocking revelations made on CBC's Marketplace on February 4. This program dealt with the growing trend across Ontario, a trend to replace registered nurses with generic health care workers to provide patient care in Ontario's hospitals.

This trend is only one factor in the mounting concern being expressed everywhere about the declining quality of care patients are receiving in our hospitals. Many professionals and citizens are asking if patients' lives are at risk because lower-paid hospital workers who have previously worked in the kitchen or performed cleaning tasks are being assigned to patient care with only a few weeks' training.

The program gave specific examples: a laundry worker asked to give an insulin injection, call buttons answered by untrained staff. The results have been serious, missed changes in vital signs and infections being only two.

Are you aware that this alarming trend is taking place in hospitals across Ontario, and can you explain to the people of Ontario why it is happening?

**Hon David Johnson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Minister of Health, Government House Leader):** Registered practical nurses and registered nurses are regulated by the College of Nurses, as I think the member opposite knows, and they're accountable to the college for providing quality care. I want to say from my observations and the observations of the Ministry of Health that quality care is being given to the people of Ontario. I have a great deal of respect for RPNs and for RNs and how they are fulfilling their mandate, how they are giving services to the people of Ontario.

I will also say that if the member opposite is concerned that people are being put in places whereby they're not fulfilling their duty, it's an offence for an employer to place a nurse in a position in which that nurse is beyond the scope of their ability. I'm confident in the level of service that's being given to the people of Ontario.

**Mrs Boyd:** The issue is not about people who are part of the registered health professions. Those people are regulated by the colleges. What we are talking about here is a clear situation where people who are not part of the registered health professions are in fact providing health care.

You say there are rules. It seems to us that no matter what rules or structures a hospital may or may not have in place, this kind of thing, this kind of change, is going on completely unregulated. It's a complaint about who's treating patients and about how much training that worker has, about accidents that are taking place because of improper training where there's no place to take those complaints.

On the Marketplace program it was reported that in the first hospital to try this experiment, Scarborough's Centenary Hospital, there were 12 reports from registered nurses to their College of Nurses about risks in patient care in the first two months, but the college could do nothing about those generic workers because they are not regulated.

Minister, are you going to bring about something concrete? Will you table legislation that will allow for the regulation of all —



**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Thank you, Minister.

**Hon David Johnson:** I have a great deal of confidence in our hospitals to assign duties to the proper individuals. My experience is that the people of Ontario are getting the quality care they deserve. We are trying to improve that care through reinvestments but, none the less, hospitals are coping well with the present situation, are assigning duties in an appropriate fashion, and the people of Ontario are getting the proper care in hospitals either through nursing staff or through the general staff that are available at hospitals.

**Mrs Boyd:** Minister, 86% of the nurses who work in hospitals say that patient care is suffering, and infection rates are going up in hospitals all over Ontario. In Scarborough recently we know that an entire emergency department had to be shut down for some time.

Your cuts to hospitals imply that 15,000 registered nursing jobs will be lost, and that's a loss to patients of 13 million patient hours. If that's allowed to happen, morbidity rates are going to jump as they have in the United States where the same kind of policy was followed. They only had budget cuts of 5%, and their morbidity rates went up 200% to 400%, depending on the jurisdiction.

You tried to tell the House yesterday that you are confident hospitals can cope by finding administrative savings. Cutting budgets is about cutting staffing. On paper that may qualify as an administrative change, but these are not administrative savings. This is about the safety of hospital patients. We're talking about people's lives. We want to know what you intend to do to make sure that everyone who offers nursing care in this province is one of the regulated health care professionals.

**Hon David Johnson:** A couple of comments: We are investing in training for nurses in the province of Ontario through McMaster University and through the University of Toronto, some \$1.75 million; \$7.3 million invested by the Ministry of Health over the next five years in a nurse practitioner education program. So the ministry is investing in nurses.

Secondly, hospital administrations and their boards are responsible for ensuring quality standards within their institutions. It's been my observation that those quality standards are being adhered to and the people of Ontario are being well served in their hospitals.

Finally, I will say that there are quality assurance committees in hospitals. Nurses are represented on those quality assurance committees to ensure that proper care is given in our hospitals.

**The Speaker:** We'll go back to the leader's question. Leader of the official opposition.

#### SALE OF LAND

**Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition):** My question is for the Minister of Environment. Your government has decided to sell provincial land bordering the Rouge Valley Park to the highest bidder. This land is an agricultural preserve which is currently being used for farming. It provides a green space buffer of 7,600 acres between the Rouge and the growing community of Pickering.

Minister, why did you in your capacity as Minister of Environment consent to the sale of this land, 7,600 acres of green space, without any restriction whatsoever being attached to that land, and in particular no requirement that it be preserved as green space?

**Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Environment and Energy):** This land and the ownership of this land and the corporation involved with it are under the jurisdiction of the Chair of Management Board, and I'll ask him to respond to the question.

**Hon David Johnson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Minister of Health, Government House Leader):** To the leader of the official opposition, this land is designated as agricultural land under the Durham official plan, under the Pickering official plan. This land is protected by that agricultural designation. This government is happy with that state of affairs. We are fully satisfied that this land is designated as agricultural and fully happy that this land remain in its agricultural designation from now until forever.

**Mr McGuinty:** I think it's important not to overlook the symbolism of what just happened here. I asked a question relating to our natural environment of the Minister of Environment. He tossed off that question to the Chair of Management Board, who has nothing whatsoever to do with the protection of our natural environment. Let's not overlook how telling an action that was.

I'm going to go back to the Minister of Environment, give him another opportunity. Minister, you know as well as I do that we're not making any more green space in Ontario, and whenever we do improve land or develop it — develop it is the better word — we rarely return it back to its original state. That's why it's so very important when we have land that's within our jurisdiction — this is Ontario land we're talking about here — that you ensure we preserve it as green space. I understand the need for fiscal responsibility, but not at the expense of our obligation to future generations to protect green space.

Minister, I'm going to ask you again: Do you not think that you have a special responsibility, especially when it comes to land that we own —

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Thank you. Chair of Management Board.

**Interjection:** How about you pass it back?

**Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma):** Try the Minister of Agriculture.

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker:** Order. I appreciate all the help, but the Chair of Management Board can make that decision.

**Hon David Johnson:** My feelings could be hurt, because I'm very happy to stand here today and say that this land is protected, and as far as the province of Ontario is concerned will stay protected as an agricultural reserve. There are about 130 or 140 occupants: some farms, some residences. What's being done is simply to offer the people who currently rent those properties the opportunity to purchase those properties and to live on them and use them as farms as long as they wish, on into the future.



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**Mr McGuinty:** When it comes to this particular tract of land, I am hoping that years from now, when parents take their kids for a walk, they'll be able to tell those kids that they've got that land and its natural space because the then Minister of Environment, Norm Sterling, had the courage, had the good sense and the foresight to say, "No, you cannot take green space and allow it to be developed."

Back to the Minister of Environment once again — we'll give him another chance — Minister, I ask you, will you exercise your proper responsibility in the circumstance and assure us that this land, 7,600 acres of beautiful green space, will be there for generations yet to come because you will not allow it to be developed?

**Hon David Johnson:** This government absolutely wishes this property be there for future generations. We are bound by the current zoning. We are happy, we're delighted with the current zoning. We want this property to remain in its current state for future generations. We want this property preserved in its natural state, as it is today, with the people who currently live on the site owning it instead of renting it, but to preserve it for future generations so that we can all be happy we have this property preserved.

#### MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

**Mr Monte Kwinter (Wilson Heights):** My question is to the Premier. Premier, last week your government announced a \$15-million advertising plan featuring Mike Harris selling the virtues of Ontario as a place to invest to potential foreign investors. Your strategy, apparently, is to target business executives who fly internationally on the assumption that they may be in a position to implement some investment decisions. Are you not concerned that the controversy over your planned changes to Ontario cities and school boards may negate any potential benefits from your advertising?

**Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier):** As a matter of fact, while the image we have abroad would not be the primary reason we would want to be more efficient and have a good, strong, vibrant Toronto, I want to assure you of this: What we are doing, to the best of my knowledge, would be tremendously well received in all countries around the world that are looking at Toronto as a strong, vibrant city into the next century.

What I have found they are looking for is this: a government that is open for business, understands business, will deal with red tape, will deal with excessive taxation and will correct the disastrous record of yourselves, the Liberals, and the NDP in the last decade. They're very happy with that.

**Mr Kwinter:** If I wanted an answer from the Premier, I couldn't have written a better one myself. I want to refer to the Economist. The Premier will know that the Economist is arguably the most influential publication of its kind in the world. It has a less-than-flattering article about you and your proposed changes. Let me read some of the quotes:

"He turned to a much-admired former mayor of Toronto, David Crombie, for advice on disentanglement,

then ignored most of what he heard. The overall effects are unknowable, but one is plain: As Ontario's population ages, the call on welfare services will increase, while education costs will lighten."

Here's another one: "The changes on the way are less of a revolution than a whirligig. Whirligigs have a way of spinning out of control and even of savaging the man in charge." The cut line under the photograph reads, "Bomber Harris."

Premier, I'm sure you know that Bomber Harris was the controversial, Second World War head of Bomber Command, who indiscriminately destroyed whole cities. Do you think that being portrayed —

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Order, order.

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker:** Member for Etobicoke-Humber. Premier.

**Hon Mr Harris:** I'd like to comment on the member's question, particularly with reference to the advertising campaign, and just remind all members of the Legislature that Gerry Phillips, the Liberal member for Scarborough-Agincourt, commended us for Market Ontario and said what a great campaign it is, and I accept the plaudits of some members of the Liberal caucus for a very encouraging campaign.

What most articles around the world and most business people around the world have been so appreciative of is that we are a government that has been bombing those taxes you people brought in. You, the party that brought in the commercial concentration tax, the tax that went over the top, that cut the heart out of the core of Toronto, have the nerve to stand here while we fix the abysmal record, while we fix this doughnut, this carving out of the very heart and core of Toronto, the awful legacy you left. How you have the nerve to question us as we put —

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker:** Order, order. New question, the member for Beaches-Woodbine.

#### YOUTH SERVICES

**Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine):** My question is to the Minister of Community and Social Services. Minister, in October 1995 my colleague from the riding of Hamilton Centre raised the plight of funding cuts to Project First Step, which is a program that helps over 65 single moms every year and assists them in getting off social assistance, back into the workplace or back into school with a budget of only \$140,000 for that program.

The then Minister of Community and Social Services, your seatmate, agreed to reinstate that budget cut because, he said: "It is true, it's to assist single moms to enter or re-enter the workforce. I agree wholeheartedly that it is an excellent program." He goes on and he talks about how it's designed to assist young, single mothers to re-enter the workforce and when people get jobs through this program, it helps children and it helps their parents.

Minister, Brock youth services in Barrie runs the exact same program, successfully helps over 75 single moms every year to get the help they need to get jobs, and it



had a budget of \$97,000 which you cut. You made an exemption for Hamilton. You said it was very good. Why won't you make an exemption for the exact same program in Barrie?

**Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Community and Social Services):** The member points out quite rightly that the Brock program has certainly served its community very well. There are many programs that are helping youth, that are helping individuals who need assistance in this area. Unfortunately, much as we would like to, we cannot afford to fund them all. We had advised this program from the Ministry of Community and Social Services — I think it was almost two years ago — that we would not be able to carry on with that funding.

I would also like to point out that many of these youth employment programs might well be eligible for further support under Ontario Works programs, because youth employment is one of the areas we're trying to make sure we are assisting through Ontario Works as well.

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**Ms Lankin:** Minister, you cut all the community youth support service funding across the province. You made an exemption from that cut for Hamilton. That was your government's decision, and it was the right decision. Let me quote you: "Although the Hamilton program was funded as a CYS program, it is an employment program that assists young single mothers to break their dependence on social assistance. It was therefore exempted from the constraints announced in October." Those are your own words in your letter, Minister.

The Hamilton program is exactly the same as the Barrie program. I've met with the people. I met with four single moms this morning whose lives were turned around by that program, who have broken the cycle of dependency you've talked about. The only difference I can find between the Hamilton program and the Barrie program is that during the 1995 election campaign, the Premier made a photo-op stop in Hamilton. He failed to go to Barrie.

I know you don't believe that those kids' futures should depend on the Premier's photo-op itinerary. Would you agree to go with me to Barrie, to meet these single moms, to see the program and to reinstate the funding?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** I thank the honourable member for the question. There is no doubt that this program has helped many individuals get on with their lives. We've certainly heard that message through the local member and through many of the presentations that have been made to us. Unfortunately, we are not able to fund all these programs. We had to make decisions based on which programs were appropriate, based on what's available in the community.

I appreciate that this is a very difficult decision and I can understand that this agency is lobbying very hard to have its funding continue. Unfortunately, we've had to make the decision that that is not the case. I would encourage them to look at other alternatives. I would also encourage them to work through Ontario Works and their community for additional support.

## VISITORS

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** I'd like to inform the members of the Legislative Assembly that we have in the Speaker's gallery today Mr W.H. Remnant, Clerk of the Manitoba Legislative Assembly, and the Manitoba legislative interns. Welcome.

*Interjection.*

**The Speaker:** The member for St Catharines obviously is here as well.

## AIRPORT DEVELOPMENT

**Mr Joseph Spina (Brampton North):** My question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs. Pearson International Airport is a major economic force in our community of Brampton. I know you recently announced a new airport policy for the province, after your extensive hearings with various parties, stakeholders. I'd like to know if you could please clarify for us today exactly what type of development will be allowed to occur in and around Ontario's airports.

**Hon Al Leach (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing):** I thank the member for Brampton North for his very good question. Last week, I announced a new airport policy for Ontario, one which protects the economic viability of our airports and ensures responsible residential development around them. Effective February 1, 1997, new residential development will not be permitted on airport lands that have a noise exposure, contour mapping, of 30 NEF — that's noise exposure forecast; I knew you were curious.

Incompatible development near airport lands has led to noise problems in those areas and this has caused problems for residential communities as well as for the economic viability of the airport. We will, however, allow commercial and industrial development around airports and we feel this new airport policy will benefit everyone.

**Mr Spina:** That policy is good news for residents. As the parliamentary assistant for small business, I'm very pleased to hear that there will be an opportunity for development for business, but I wondered if you could give me some specific examples of the economic benefits that airports would have on these local communities.

**Hon Mr Leach:** I'd be happy to share that information with the member and all of the other members of this House. As usual, the member is absolutely correct: Airports are important generators for jobs and investment in our province. For example, Pearson airport in Toronto provides for 49,500 direct jobs and 26,600 indirect jobs. It also generates approximately \$9.7 billion in business revenue. Some 31 million passengers are forecast to use the airport by the year 2005, and when these projections materialize it is estimated that business revenue will increase to \$14 billion and the total jobs to 140,000.

## FERRY SERVICE FEES

**Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands):** My question is to the Premier. Premier, let me quote to you from a transcript of an interview that you gave on May



21, 1994, when the former government was about to institute ferry fees with respect to some of the island services.

You stated, "Well, it was wrong; the government retroactively changed something that was institutionalized for a considerable period of time, with no impact study, no discussion, with no involvement with the residents." Furthermore, you said: "I don't think it's fair for somebody who lives there and been told by the government it's free to have to use it twice a day to be faced with \$1,000 or \$1,500 after-tax increase in the cost.... If I was Premier I would bring in an impact study. I would talk to residents. I would say here's where we're at."

Premier, as you know, your government just recently indicated that the ferry subsidies will no longer service about six or seven island communities. What do you have to say to those 3,000 permanent residents who live on those islands now? Will you —

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Member for Kingston and The Islands, thank you. Premier.

**Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier):** I appreciate the question, and you're right: We were concerned when provinces responsible for ferries were making decisions without consultation. As we're now proposing that municipalities be responsible for ferries, I would assume that municipalities would act responsibly if they're going to bring in any fees.

**Mr Gerretsen:** Mr Premier, you indicated: "If I was Premier I would bring in an impact study. I would talk to residents. I would say here's where we're at." Nobody has spoken to these residents. We're talking about costs of \$2,400 per person. Premier, you're travelling about the province, going from place to place, saying that you are keeping your promises. You've got these glitzy television ads saying that you're keeping your promise. Why are you not keeping your promise to these islanders? Why are you breaking this promise that you solemnly made to them on May 21, 1994?

**Hon Mr Harris:** Through Who Does What, we're turning over the responsibility to the municipalities. We're also giving the municipalities massive tax capacity by taking some \$6 billion off the property taxes. We also, through Who Does What, are looking at a number of other changes.

So it would be up to the local municipalities — the same with policing, the same with the farm tax rebate, the same with a number of the other services that we are trading. We're giving them tax points, and they can come and apply for grants if they feel any of the changes are disadvantaging them more than in other cases. So I would invite Wolfe Island — perhaps when they analyse all the changes, they'll be in such a massive surplus that they'll build new ferries. I don't know that, though, and they are free to come and let us know and state their case.

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#### FAMILY SUPPORT PLAN

**Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold):** I've got a question of the Premier. Premier, your Attorney General —

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Well, it's kind of mutual. Member for Welland-Thorold.

**Mr Kormos:** Thank you, Speaker, and you'll recall that this was to the Premier. His Attorney General has bungled and mismanaged the family support plan from day one. Videotape in November illustrated that very graphically. Notwithstanding his assurances since then that things are better up at the Downsview office, the facts remain that he still continues to supervise an FSP that's in a shambles.

Donalda S. of Toronto, a mother of two, was receiving regular payments for years until October 1996. Since then she's been abused by your family support plan, mismanaged by your Attorney General, and as of today is still owed \$813 which the plan has but just isn't capable of releasing to her.

It's your government's decision to shut down eight regional offices and terminate 290 employees and your decision to keep your Attorney General in charge of this plan. It still isn't working. You're still making mothers and their children suffer because of your Attorney General's mismanagement. What are you going to do about that problem?

**Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier):** I appreciate the member's question. We're all aware of his keen interest in the plan and I would hope, as the plan is gradually improving to a success rate far in excess of when his party was in office but not yet perfect, that the member would be appreciative and supportive of that and supportive of the Attorney General.

With regard to this specific case, clearly not every single one of the cases is being handled at least perfectly as each complainant would like them to be handled. If you have an individual one, if you'd send it over to me, I'll make sure the Attorney General gets it, and with as much dispatch as we can possibly have we'll try and correct that situation.

**Mr Kormos:** You, Premier, expressed your concern about the condition of the plan back on December 19, 1996. You were distraught about the mismanagement of the plan at that time.

You still should be concerned, Premier, because we've raised case after case after case, and continue to do so, of mothers who don't have the money to feed their kids and to pay rent and pay for utilities, and your Attorney General keeps saying that everything's fine. He doesn't get it, nor do you.

The real crime here is that women and their kids are not getting money that they're entitled to. The women and those kids in Ontario who rely upon your FSP — and I tell you, there remain thousands of outstanding unresolved cases — have lost all faith in your Attorney General. Surely you don't think that everything is fine. What do you say now to those women and their kids and what are you going to do about your Attorney General's mismanagement of that very important plan?

**Hon Mr Harris:** Nobody has said that the plan is fine, that everything is hunky-dory, neither I nor the Attorney General. What we have said is this: that it is far better than it was when you were in government. In January 1995, under the NDP government, \$27.5 million sent to families. Now, in 1997, \$37.5 million sent to families.



But I want to tell you, it is still not perfect. I'll tell you, in spite of the fact that it's not perfect, in spite of all that, we are still working to make it even better. It's far better than it was under your government. Under the Liberals in 1990 it was \$8.9 million, so we're about five or six times that.

The enforcement measures that this Attorney General has passed are among the toughest in North America. They've been applauded across the country; they've been applauded across North America. Despite your party's filibustering and slowing us down, he has still brought into place some of the toughest measures in North America, and we're very proud of that.

#### WINTER HIGHWAY MAINTENANCE

**Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Simcoe Centre):** My question is for the Minister of Transportation. As you know, many of my constituents travel the 400-series highway on their way to the greater Toronto area. There are many days when I join them as I travel between Barrie and Queen's Park. During the winter we depend heavily on the Ministry of Transportation's plows, sanders and salters, as this daily commute can be made more difficult by freezing rain, whiteouts, snowstorms and slush.

Many of my constituents believe this vital service has been cut this year. Can you please tell the House if there have been any cutbacks to highway sanding, salting and plowing in the province of Ontario?

**Hon Al Palladini (Minister of Transportation):** I would like to thank the member for Simcoe Centre for the question and I welcome the opportunity to reconfirm that this government remains fully committed to making sure that safety on our highways is done.

Our standards for winter maintenance have not changed. What has changed is the way we deliver them. There have been no changes to the funding levels for winter maintenance from last year to this year. We will spend what we have to spend — and I said this last year — to make sure that our roads are plowed.

**Mr Tascona:** I'm sure my constituents, some of whom have joined me in the House today, will be pleased to hear that vital road-clearing service has not been cut.

Minister, some of my constituents believe that the ministry waits until after the bad weather hits the road before the service starts. Could you please tell the members of this House what criteria your ministry uses to get ministry equipment out on the roads?

**Hon Mr Palladini:** I would like to inform the member that MTO staff and equipment dedicated to the provincial highway system are ready and able to respond as soon as winter conditions are identified. Our weather forecasting equipment and methods get better all the time, and that allows us to call in staff and equipment as needed. When it snows, we are there.

We are always looking, mind you, to improve our effectiveness and efficiency. Besides electronic monitoring, our highways are patrolled by staff to identify problems or situations that may make the roads hazardous. Our objective has been and always will be to salt before ice forms on the pavement —

*Interjections.*

**Hon Mr Palladini:** As I was saying, besides electronic monitoring, our highways are patrolled by staff to identify problem areas, to make sure that salting gets done before it freezes and to plow and sand continuously throughout a winter storm. Because of the degree of traffic on the 400-series highways, I can tell the member that the 400-series highways do get special attention.

#### HOSPITAL RESTRUCTURING RESTRUCTURATION DES HÔPITAUX

**Mr Bernard Grandmaître (Ottawa East):** My question is to the Minister of Health. Minister, you recently announced your 1997 hospital budget cuts in the amount of \$435 million. The Ottawa General Hospital suffered a 9.9% cutback and the Ottawa Civic 7.7%, just to name a few. Our hospital administrators are expected to table their budgets by March 27 of this year, and only a few days later your restructuring commission will table its report to close more hospitals — maybe two or three — in the Ottawa-Carleton area.

We don't think it makes any sense that you would ask these people to make budget cuts now. Let me cite you an example of how your budget cuts are affecting my constituents. Mrs Lorraine Ansell who resides in my riding had her heart surgery cancelled twice. Imagine preparing yourself emotionally and mentally not once but twice. Will you not agree —

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Thank you. Minister.

**Hon David Johnson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Minister of Health, Government House Leader):** The hospital operating program was announced over a year ago by the Minister of Health. It was a three-year program, to the member opposite, that takes into account this fiscal year and the next two fiscal years.

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Funding for the Ottawa General Hospital is one of the many hospitals, of course, that went through the JPPC formula, and through a quirk came out a little bit higher cut than it should have, at about 9% that the member alluded to. That has been corrected. The Ottawa General has been informed verbally that no hospital in Ontario will receive a reduced amount beyond 8% and will get confirmation of that.

I say to the member opposite that this government is reinvesting moneys into the hospitals across Ontario, reinvesting in cardiac care, diabetes care, cancer treatment, kidney dialysis. That money is going back into our hospital system.

**The Speaker:** Supplementary.

**M. Grandmaître :** Monsieur le Ministre, vous ne semblez pas comprendre le dilemme dans lequel vous placez nos administrateurs dans la région d'Ottawa-Carleton. Ces gens se préparent à fermer une centaine de lits, de limoger de 200 à 300 personnes. Je vous demande de repenser : ne pensez-vous pas que nos administrateurs aient raison de vous demander de retenir les réductions budgétaires avant que votre commission se prononce, oui ou non ?



**Hon David Johnson:** I have been terribly delighted with the cooperation of the hospitals across Ontario. Some hospitals have reduced management levels, some hospitals have reduced vice-presidents, some have involved early retirement programs for management people, for example. Some hospitals are sharing staff between hospitals, particularly administrative staff, to reduce costs. Some are conserving energy, reducing energy costs. Other have a more effective waste disposal program.

The money is coming out of the system where it's not being put to the benefit of the patient and it's going right back into the system. We are reinvesting that money back into the system, where the patient needs it, in the form of cancer treatment, cardiac treatment, all the other services that are needed for patients. We are putting the patients first.

#### FAMILY SUPPORT PLAN

**Ms Shelley Martel (Sudbury East):** I have a question to the Premier regarding the family support plan. Your Attorney General recently told this House that as soon as the family support plan receives payment from payors, it's processed and sent to the recipients. He assured this House that this occurs between 24 to 48 hours when the payment is received.

Diane Burke of Sudbury knows better. On January 5 the employer of the payor forwarded the January support payment to the family support plan. The plan cashed the cheque on January 22. Diane's money was not sent to her until February 7, 17 days after it was first cashed by the family support plan. Premier, can you tell Diane Burke why the family support plan held her money for 17 days? And can you tell her why the Attorney General is so out of touch with what is really happening at the family support plan?

**Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier):** I appreciate the member's question. I know that she too, like her colleague, is very interested in this plan and I think probably helping to encourage us to make the changes from the disastrous mess that was there under the NDP. I appreciate that encouragement. That's the kind of non-partisan support that is important to help us clean up the mess you left, and I appreciate that. As we all know and I think you accept and the stats are out, on average the plan is running so much better than it did when you were there, and everybody knows and accepts that because the facts are the facts.

But there are individual cases, and every individual case concerns us immensely; it concerns me as Premier and it concerns the Attorney General. If you would like to send me the details of the case that you raise — in some cases the address is wrong, in other cases the forms aren't filled out correctly, in other cases the cheque may come from a different bank, but I have no way of knowing, and I wouldn't comment on an individual case, nor would the Attorney General.

**Ms Martel:** I should tell the Premier that I already had to raise the case of Diane Burke this fall. She used to receive regular support payments until the cuts you made to the family support plan. When I raised her original case she was three months behind in receiving a payment and she's still having problems.

Your Attorney General also promised to compensate recipients who had to pay additional costs because of late or lost cheques. Specifically he said he would compensate people for penalties for late hydro, telephone, gas and mortgage payments and NSF cheques. But the Attorney General has said he will only compensate people whose cheques were late or lost in September and October.

Suzanne Beauvais's support cheques have been late every single month since you made your cuts to the family support plan. Finally in November she could not make a payment on a personal loan at the CIBC. She has applied for compensation from your Attorney General to pay for that charge. She has been refused because that late payment did not occur in September and October. Can you tell me why this Attorney General is penalizing Suzanne Beauvais?

**Hon Mr Harris:** I appreciate the member assisting us with individual cases. It's very helpful. It's that spirit of non-partisanship that is so important, and I appreciate it. I know when we used to raise case after case after case, when the plan was such a disaster when you were in government, you didn't seem to appreciate that we were raising them and bringing them to your attention and helping people. But we appreciate it.

We know the system is not perfect. We certainly know we're not perfect. If there are individual cases, even though on average it's so much better than when you were in office, I want to tell you we appreciate your help, and keep up the good work.

#### LIABILITY OF VOLUNTEERS

**Mr John O'Toole (Durham East):** My question is to the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations. In my riding of Durham East there have been concerns by volunteers in the community who would like to spend some of their time volunteering on boards of directors of non-profit corporations like community hall boards, fair boards, minor hockey associations and minor soccer associations, but they're really concerned about the liability and risk in serving as volunteers on these boards. I've been hearing this for many years. Can you do anything about this potential liability?

**Hon David H. Tsubouchi (Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations):** The member for Durham East is quite right that many volunteer organizations, many volunteers, whether it's minor hockey or softball or basketball, ratepayers' groups, seniors' groups, have a concern about volunteering to be on their respective boards because of possible liability.

I'm very happy to advise you that under our red tape bill, Bill 117, we will allow these organizations to indemnify people who are volunteering for their boards, and secondly to purchase indemnification insurance to make sure they're not liable.

In addition, we are going to allow non-profit organizations to forego an annual financial audit if all the members agree and if the annual income is less than \$10,000. This, in effect, should save the organizations in the neighbourhood of around \$2,000 a year, which is better used for serving their communities.



**Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Pursuant to standing order 23(i), in his response to my question, I put to you, sir, that the Premier imputed false motives. He suggested that I filibustered Bill 82. That simply was not the case. The real filibuster was the Premier's in refusing to fire an incompetent Attorney General. That's what caused the problem, and I'd like the opportunity to correct —

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** The member for Welland-Thorold, I suggest that is possibly an opinion, and they may offer opinions on all sides of this House. I would not suggest for a moment that he imputed motive.

## PETITIONS

### TVONTARIO

**Mr Michael Gravelle (Port Arthur):** As you know, there's a campaign on to save TVOntario, and we have petitions coming through.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas TVOntario has served Ontarians of all ages for more than 25 years with quality non-commercial television that continues to focus 70% of its programming on education and children's programming; and

"Whereas TVO is available to 97.4% of Ontarians and for some uncabled communities is the only station available, making it a truly provincial asset; and

"Whereas TVO continues to work towards increasing self-generated revenues;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to ensure that TVOntario continue to be a publicly owned and funded educational broadcaster."

I'm pleased to sign my name to that petition.

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### ONTARIO CORRECTIONAL INSTITUTE

**Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale):** This petition is to the Honourable Robert Runciman.

"We, the undersigned, believe that helping reduce crime and abuse in our communities is our responsibility as employees of the Ministry of Correctional Services, as professionals in related fields and as concerned citizens;

"Closing institutions which provide specialized services to women and treatment to men does not achieve that goal;

"Physical, emotional and sexual abuse is often transmitted from one generation to the next, with tremendous cost to society;

"Treatment aimed at breaking that cycle must include the abuser so that another generation of children is not raised with the same destructive lessons;

"As Mr Ross Virgo stated, the Ontario Correctional Institute is 'a therapeutic community known around the world for their techniques';

"Research statistics support anecdotal evidence that we are effective in changing abusive behaviour;

"A therapeutic community cannot exist in a super-prison;

"Save victims and money by keeping what works open."

I affix my name to this petition.

### SOCIAL ASSISTANCE FOR THE DISABLED

**Mr Gerry Martiniuk (Cambridge):** I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas disabled persons are currently classified under family benefits and the guidelines discriminate against them in some cases;

"Whereas the Tory government has recognized the need to establish a separate category for the disabled, but their failure to do so has resulted in financial hardship to some disabled who have 'fallen through the cracks' and had their pensions cancelled under existing guidelines;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"The disabled must be allowed the same rights as their non-disabled counterparts: the right to an income and financial independence. The government must establish a separate category for the disabled and separate guidelines for the disabled without any further delay."

I affix my name to the front of the document.

### HOSPITAL FINANCING

**Mr Frank Miclash (Kenora):** I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario which reads:

"Whereas Ontarians are gravely concerned with the historic \$1.3-billion cut to base funding of hospitals; and

"Whereas Ontarians feel that health services are suffering; and

"Whereas the government is reducing hospital funding and not reinvesting millions of dollars into the communities that they are being taken away from;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to call on the Conservative government to stop the cuts to base funding for hospitals across Ontario and to ensure that community services are in place before the removal of hospital services. The Conservative government must fund hospitals with a funding formula that reflects demographic and regional needs. The Conservative government must ensure that health services are available, including emergency and urgent care, to all Ontarians."

I have attached my name to that petition as well.

### MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

**Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine):** "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the creation of a megacity in Toronto is a smokescreen to hide the downloading of massive costs in health, welfare, housing and other social service costs on Metro and other municipalities; and

"Whereas study after study shows that megacities are more expensive and less effective than smaller, more accountable local governments; and

"Whereas a megacity will create a huge new bureaucracy; and

"Whereas the costs of setting up and running a megacity will force up taxes and rent in Toronto; and



"Whereas a megacity will lead to cuts in libraries, public transit, public health, parks, swimming pools and child care centres; and

"Whereas in disregard of basic democratic principles, the Harris government has acted as if Bill 103 were already law, appointing trustees to oversee the actions of elected public officials, with no accountability to the citizens; and

"Whereas Premier Mike Harris and Municipal Affairs Minister Al Leach, in an arrogant rush to find billions to pay for a phoney tax scheme, have declared that they will ignore the results of the March 3 vote by citizens of Metro Toronto on the megacity;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to listen to the voices of outrage against the megacity legislation, follow the wishes of the public as expressed in the March 3 referendum and go back to the drawing board with local citizens and elected officials to improve local government without downloading costs or creating new mega-bureaucracies."

This is signed by a number of citizens in the city of East York, and I have affixed my signature to the petition as well.

#### MAGNETIC RESONANCE IMAGER

**Mr R. Gary Stewart (Peterborough):** I have the pleasure of presenting a petition today on behalf of 1,500 people in the Peterborough area regarding MRI service in our area. I would like to thank Mrs McConnachie, who looked after and collected many of these names. The petition reads:

"To the Legislature of Ontario:

"Whereas Peterborough has the professionals to qualify as a health leader of the province;

"Whereas we especially have a large number of radiologists and the costs for patients needing MRIs to go to Toronto are escalating;

"Whereas delays in testing are detrimental to the health of patients,

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Peterborough, with a base hospital serving 300,000 people, should have the next MRI unit in Ontario."

To that I affix my signature and support this petition.

#### RENT REGULATION

**Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-Walkerville):** I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the Rent Control Act protects Ontario's 3.3 million tenants and allows for security and stability in their homes and communities; and

"Whereas lifting rent control in Ontario would leave tenants with uncontrollable rent increases and financial instability; and

"Whereas the Progressive Conservative government is considering changes to the Landlord and Tenant Act favouring easier and faster evictions by landlords;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to save rent control."

I, along with the hundreds of residents of 8575 Riverside Drive East in Windsor's Shoreline Tower, affix my signature in support of this petition.

#### BEAR HUNTING

**Mrs Lillian Ross (Hamilton West):** I have a petition to the Parliament of Ontario.

"Whereas bears are hunted in the spring after they have come out of hibernation; and

"Whereas about 30% of the bears killed in the spring are female, some with cubs; and

"Whereas over 70% of the orphaned cubs do not survive the first year; and

"Whereas Ontario still allows the limited use of dogs in bear hunting; and

"Whereas bears are the only large mammals hunted in the spring;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to amend the Game and Fish Act to prohibit the hunting of bears in the spring and to prohibit the use of baiting and dogs in all bear hunting activities."

I'd like to hand this to Marybeth Kigar, a page from Hamilton West.

#### RENT REGULATION

**Mr Alvin Curling (Scarborough North):** I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the Rent Control Act protects Ontario's 3.3 million tenants and allows for security and stability in their homes and communities; and

"Whereas lifting rent control in Ontario would leave tenants with uncontrollable rent increases and financial instability; and

"Whereas the Progressive Conservative government is considering changes to the Landlord and Tenant Act favouring easier and faster eviction by landlords;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to save rent control."

Thousands of people in Scarborough and at 1650 Sheppard Avenue affixed their signatures, and I will do so too.

#### OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

**Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre):** I have a petition forwarded to me by K. Zarowny, the health and safety co-chair of OPSEU, Local 340, in Oshawa. The petition reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Harris government has begun a process to open the Occupational Health and Safety Act of Ontario; and

"Whereas this act is the single most important piece of legislation for working people since it is designed to protect our lives, safety and health while at work and allow us to return home to our families in the same condition in which we left; and

"Whereas the government has made it clear that they intend to water down the act and weaken the rights of workers under the law, including the right to know, the right to participate and especially the right to refuse unsafe work; and



"Whereas this government has already watered down proper training of certified committee members;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario not to alter the Occupational Health and Safety Act or erode the rights of workers any further and ensure strict enforcement of the legislation."

I add my name to theirs in support.

#### CLASS SIZE

**Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury):** This petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the private member's bill introduced by Rick Bartolucci which promotes smaller class sizes passed second reading; and

"Whereas this bill, known as Bill 110, was referred to the social development committee; and

"Whereas we, the stakeholders in education, want the government committee to hear what we have to say about smaller class sizes; and

"Whereas we want to hear what the government committee has to say regarding smaller class sizes; and

"Whereas all people in Ontario have a right to speak to the social development committee about smaller class sizes;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support the recommendation that the social development committee travel across Ontario to find out what the students, parents, teachers and taxpayers of Ontario are saying about smaller class sizes and Bill 110, the smaller class sizes act."

Of course I affix my signature to this petition.

1500

#### FIREARMS CONTROL

**Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre):** I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, signed by a number of people from London, Kingsville and Windsor, and it says:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas violence involving firearms is unacceptably common; and

"Whereas the requirement that firearms be registered as proposed by the federal government is reasonable;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately withdraw all opposition to the federal gun control legislation.

"Further, we demand that all money that would have been spent to oppose the federal gun control legislation instead be spent on the prevention of domestic violence and on services for victims of domestic violence."

I'm proud to affix my signature.

#### NORTH YORK BRANSON HOSPITAL

**Mr Monte Kwinter (Wilson Heights):** I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the final report of the Metropolitan Toronto District Health Council hospital restructuring committee has recommended that North York Branson Hospital merge with York-Finch hospital; and

"Whereas this recommendation will remove emergency and inpatient services currently provided by North York

Branson Hospital, which will seriously jeopardize medical care and the quality of health for the growing population which the hospital serves, many being elderly people who in numerous cases require treatment for life-threatening medical conditions;

"We petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reject the recommendation contained within the final report of the Metropolitan Toronto District Health Council hospital restructuring committee as it pertains to North York Branson Hospital, so that it retains, at minimum, emergency and inpatient services."

I've affixed my signature.

#### MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

**Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine):** I have a petition to the Legislature of Ontario.

"Whereas 'bigger government is not better' and the Mike Harris government has no right to dictate a megacity upon the citizens of Toronto;

"Whereas the megacity is being imposed on 2.3 million citizens in Metro Toronto without giving people a voice in the future of their cities and neighbourhoods;

"Whereas a megacity could lead to mega property tax increases, mega user fees and mega cuts in services; and

"Whereas the Tories never proposed abolishing local government in favour of bigger government during the election campaign;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario as follows:

"To give the 2.3 million people in Metro Toronto a say in the future of their cities and stop the imposition of a megacity."

That's signed by pages and pages of citizens from Beaches-Woodbine, and I have affixed my signature as well.

#### FIRE SAFETY

**Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury):** This petition is a petition in response to Bill 84 to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the firefighters of Sudbury and Ontario are very concerned about Bill 84;

"Whereas we feel Bill 84 is unfair;

"Whereas we feel Bill 84 is discriminatory;

"Whereas we feel Bill 84 endangers the wellbeing of the people of Ontario;

"Whereas we feel Bill 84 requires extensive changes;

"Whereas we feel Bill 84 needs broad provincial public hearings before implementation;

"Whereas we are very concerned about Bill 84 and don't want to be burned by Bill 84;

"We, the undersigned, therefore petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to demand the Solicitor General to rewrite Bill 84 before being enacted into law and only after extensive public hearings across Ontario."

I affix my name to this petition.

#### OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

**Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre):** "Whereas it is vital that occupational health and safety



services provided to workers be conducted by organizations in which workers have faith; and

"Whereas the Workers' Health and Safety Centre and the occupational health clinics for Ontario workers have provided such services on behalf of workers for many years; and

"Whereas the centre and clinics have made a significant contribution to improvements in workplace health and safety and the reduction of injuries, illnesses and death caused by work;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to oppose any attempt to erode the structure, services or funding of the Workers' Health and Safety Centre and the occupational health clinics for Ontario workers.

"Further, we, the undersigned, demand that education and training of Ontario workers continue in its present form through the Workers' Health and Safety Centre and that professional and technical expertise and advice continue to be provided through the occupational health clinics for Ontario workers."

I add my name to theirs.

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

### FAIR MUNICIPAL FINANCE ACT, 1997

#### LOI DE 1997 SUR LE FINANCEMENT ÉQUITABLE DES MUNICIPALITÉS

Mr Eves moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 106, An Act respecting the financing of local government / Projet de loi 106, Loi concernant le financement des administrations locales.

**Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance):** Ontario's system of assessment and property tax is outdated, inconsistent and unclear. For far too long previous governments did not take up the challenge of fixing an out-of-date and unfair property tax system. Despite numerous different commissions and studies on property assessment in the last two decades, previous governments of all three political stripes failed to act. Because they didn't act, thousands of homeowners and businesses have been paying more property tax than they should have been. That's not fair.

It's hard for business to compete when the playing field is not level. Ontarians told us to fix these problems and we are fixing them. We are taking the action that previous governments would not. Through Bill 106, the Fair Municipal Finance Act, we are creating a system that is fair, clear, more consistent and more accountable.

Bill 106 will establish the Ontario fair assessment system, which will be based on current value. It will ensure regular updates of properties' assessed values. It will make the property tax system fairer and easier for taxpayers to understand. It will cut property taxes for farmers and woodlot owners. It will exempt conservation lands from property tax. It will scrap the outdated business occupancy tax. It will simplify the process for assessment appeals and it will cut red tape and reduce administrative burden for municipalities.

In Ontario today assessments are based on property values that range from 1940 to 1992. When assessments

no longer reflect how values change over time, the distribution of taxes is unfair. In some municipalities assessments haven't been updated for 50 years. As a result, there's a lot of unfairness in the existing system. While properties in the Niagara Falls region are assessed at 1992 values and property owners pay taxes based on that assessment, in some areas of Toronto properties are assessed at 1940 values and taxes are paid accordingly. There are even situations where homes purchased at the same time for the same price in the same community are assessed differently. This is inconsistent and it is unfair. Bill 106 will end that unfairness.

When we implement the Ontario fair assessment system in 1998, the updated system will base property values on June 30, 1996, current value. Similar properties with a similar value within a municipality will pay similar taxes. Property assessment will be consistent across the province for the first time and assessments will be kept current by a process of regular updates with three-year rolling averages moderating year-to-year fluctuations in property values.

Finally taxpayers will be able to judge whether the assessed value placed on their property is fair and reasonable, and they will be better able to compare the rates of tax they pay to support municipal services with those paid in other municipalities and communities. They will understand how their property assessments are determined. We are introducing a fair, consistent, clear and accountable property tax assessment system and we are providing a stable, predictable revenue base for local government.

For Metro Toronto, an out-of-date system has meant that the tax base has been continually eroded by successful appeals over the last number of years. In fact, in 1993 and 1994 approximately 100,000 appeals were filed each year. Successful appeals are costing Metro Toronto \$100 million a year each and every single year. Those losses accumulate and they grow on an annualized basis. Every year since 1990, approximately 40% of the city of Toronto's assessment base has been under appeal. This represents the worst appeal activity in all of Ontario, and may well be in all of Canada. For the purpose of comparison, in British Columbia, which has implemented a current value property tax system similar to the Ontario assessment system, less than 2% of assessable units are appealed each year, compared to 40% in the city of Toronto.

#### 1510

The evidence is clear: The Ontario fair assessment system will be a fairer and better system for both property taxpayers and municipalities. It will be more stable and manageable. It will cost less to run. It will not be prone to appeals like the current system. Municipal governments will have the flexibility to phase in the new property tax system in a way that is sensitive to their local circumstances. Municipalities will have up to eight years to phase in the tax changes arising from the assessment update, double the period that was previously available in the past.

Municipal governments will be able to bring in changes fairly, compassionately, and consistent with local community needs. We are protecting society's most vulnerable by enabling municipalities to ensure fair



treatment of low-income seniors and disabled persons. I am confident that municipal representatives understand best the needs of their community and their neighbours.

In addition, municipal governments will now have a choice in setting different tax rates for different classes of property. Across the province, the standard classes will include residential, multiresidential, commercial, industrial, pipeline, farm land and managed forests. Municipal governments will also be able to request additional classes of property from the province if they feel this is required to meet their local needs.

The new legislation will scrap the antiquated business occupancy tax. This is an outdated and cumbersome system of taxing business that has been on the books since 1904 and has not been changed since that period of time. It is based on arbitrary tax rates that have no relation to the economy of Ontario in 1997. Businesses have rightly complained about this tax for some time. The Crombie panel recommended we get rid of it, and we are. We are giving municipalities the tools, if they choose, to recover their share of business occupancy tax revenue. They can continue to raise this revenue from business or they can raise some or all of the dollars from other classes of property if they so choose for their community.

Farm property and managed forests will also be treated more fairly with this new legislation. Instead of tying up farmers' capital unnecessarily by requiring farmers to pay the tax and then rebating 75%, the property class eligible for farm property tax and managed forests will have a tax rate of 25% of the residential rate in that particular community or municipality. Farmers have been asking for this red-tape-cutting change for years. Finally farmers will get what they've been asking for.

The bill will exempt eligible conservation lands from property taxation and it will continue the current property tax treatment for designated airport authorities.

In the spring we will be introducing legislation to return delivery of assessment services to the municipal level as of January 1, 1998. We will be consulting on implementing the transfer with the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, the Federation of Northern Ontario Municipalities and the Rural Ontario Municipal Association, among other groups.

Bill 106 will bring fairness back into property taxation in the province. Local taxes will now be tied more directly to local services. Local decision-makers will be more accountable to the people who pay the bills: the taxpayers in each community. Long-overdue changes will be made to the way local governments fund services through property taxes. More stable revenues will let municipalities plan better to deliver their services to their communities today and in the future.

This bill, together with other Who Does What reforms announced by my colleagues, will pave the way for less costly government at all levels in the future. That means better service and lower taxes for Ontarians.

Many municipalities have already shown how they are saving taxpayers' money without compromising services. They are eliminating overlap, duplication and waste. They are joining with other municipalities in the private sector to find savings by delivering services more efficiently. In

my own riding, municipalities were pursuing options around better service at less cost two years before Who Does What reforms were ever announced by this government.

It is about fairness, it is about better government, it is about lower property taxes in the future. All Ontario taxpayers will be winners, and it's about time.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin):** Questions or comments?

**Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands):** Let me say first of all that the minister is quite correct when he states that all these are tied into the Who Does What panel recommendations. The problem, of course, is that the government has not implemented all of those recommendations and implementing them and not the other recommendations, in effect you're not getting an equal equation, and the municipal taxpayer undoubtedly will end up paying more.

I think it's also very interesting to hear in his speech that he talked about all the taxpayers who are paying too much; all the businesses and the property owners who are paying too much. If this is truly revenue-neutral, if there are X number of taxpayers who are paying too much, then he also has to acknowledge the fact that there is an equal number of taxpayers, or at least an equal amount, paying too little. I think he should have perhaps paid a bit more attention to that or at least highlighted that in his speech a bit more. It's like, "I'm only giving you the good news but not the bad news."

The one thing that's really sadly lacking about all of these announcements is the fact that we don't have the detailed studies that actually indicate how different properties and different sectors in our communities will be affected by these changes. The people of Ontario want to know what they're buying into. Where are the impact studies? I'm sure the ministry's got these studies. Why don't you release these studies if they're all about fairness? Surely the fair thing to do is to allow the people of Ontario to know exactly what they're buying into, what they're asked to endorse, and the only way they can do that is by seeing the actual studies.

The ministry so far, as a result of questions that have been asked here in the House, and as a result of questions that have been asked outside the House as well, has not as yet produced any of the studies that clearly indicate to the people of Ontario that they are the winners in this system. I doubt it.

**Mr Rosario Marchese (Fort York):** The minister talks about this bill as if it were indeed a Fair Municipal Finance Act.

**Mr John R. Baird (Nepean):** True.

**Mr Marchese:** It will be fair for some but it will be incredibly unfair to many. You nod your head, Johnny, over there, but this bill means and spells a lot of property tax increases to a lot of people. It's for that reason that your government and this minister do not want to release the studies. They have them. We did them. We released the studies when we were in a position to have to do so, and we were quite happy to show the people the impact of those increases. But this government doesn't want to.



You can ask yourselves, why is it that this minister and this government refuse to do that? Well, I can tell you why. Because if they were to release them at this moment, a whole number of people would see that they're going to face a lot of increases in their property taxes. How is Mike the Taxfighter going to explain that to a number of people in Metropolitan Toronto and in other constituencies — 79 municipalities — who will face the wrath of this particular bill?

When combined with the dumping of welfare and housing and child care and many other services to the municipal taxpayer, you're going to see a lethal combination. Property taxes will indeed increase, and I'm not sure whether Mike the Taxfighter is going to, once and for all, eat his straw hat, because he promised there would be tax decreases and not increases. This bill will be a tax increase for many taxpayers in Metropolitan Toronto and Ontario. I guarantee it.

1520

**Mr David Turnbull (York Mills):** What the member for Fort York fails to understand in his comments about the minister's speech is that the proposal the NDP brought forward was based upon the 1988 assessment year, which was the highest and most unstable year for any assessment that we've ever known in this province in history. This, on the other hand, is based on the 1996 assessment year, which by every measure is the most stable year we've had since the 1940s. We're also taxing on the basis of the present use, while you, sir, were going to do it on the highest and best use under your legislation. When you pulled back on the legislation, it wasn't because of the fact that highest and best use was a problem. You seem to have amnesia on this issue.

The fact is the people who didn't like a value-based system have lost the argument. I'm one of them. Nevertheless, this is a much fairer approach than the approach which either the NDP or the Liberals took, because they were going to use a 1988 assessment year. They were going to use highest and best use and they were not going to mitigate in the way that we are proposing to mitigate the changes, which always happen when you change a tax assessment system.

The member for Fort York should reflect a little bit on the history as to what they brought forward, which was an abominable piece of legislation. I didn't hear him speaking out against it at the time. He was voting with the government. On the other hand, we are bringing forward a piece of legislation which will be fair to the taxpayers of Ontario.

**Mr Jean-Marc Lalonde (Prescott and Russell):** In this case we're talking about fairness. I really don't know where we're getting the word "fairness" in this case. When we talk about fairness, it's to say people are just going to pay for what they are using, when we're talking of a user fee in this case.

But when we mention in this House that the farmers are going to be cut by \$171 million in transfer of money from the provincial government, who do you think is going to pay that \$171 million? It's the taxpayers of the local municipalities, because the provincial government will have a saving of \$171 million but this tax burden will be on the shoulders of all the taxpayers across the province.

True, the farmers will be paying only 25%, but I was looking at the Christian Farmers bulletin just this week. They were saying, "Be careful, because that \$171 million that will be absorbed by the municipalities will be coming up through a different type of taxes that the farmers are going to be asked to pay."

In this case I'm just looking at, it's possible that the farmers will be required to get licences for their tractors. It's going to be possible that they'll need a special permit to get on the highway. At the present time, they travel anywhere in Ontario. Definitely, the government or the municipalities will impose a special tax for the farmers.

We're talking about a business tax in Prescott and Russell at the county level. Not counting the 18 municipalities, there's a loss of \$485,000 in there. Talking about the business tax also, the snow removal that goes on in the municipalities — who do you think is going to pay for that in the future?

**The Deputy Speaker:** Minister.

**Hon Mr Eves:** Just a few brief comments in response. I say to the member for Kingston and The Islands, undoubtedly there will be some adversely impacted municipalities, obviously, and there will be some adversely impacted property taxpayers, but the reality is that right now the system is totally inequitable. You have municipalities ranging from 1940 values to 1992 values and we're addressing those inequities. I would say that anybody who is currently operating on an assessment base of, say, 1984 to 1992, will see very little change in their 1996 value. In fact, it may be less than it was in 1984 or 1988, depending on your region of the province of Ontario.

We are allowing municipalities several mechanisms, as I said in my remarks, to phase this in over eight years, to try to protect those people from increases in property taxation if they happen to be among the few who are going to be adversely affected. But there isn't any doubt that the system that exists today is totally unworkable and unfair.

I would just like to remind a few of the members who have spoken — the member for Fort York and the member for Prescott and Russell as well — of a few things that a few people they might listen have to say. Jim Witty, the Durham region chair: "Reassessment in Ajax wasn't the end of the world. My comment was, 'If your taxes are going up it means you've been underpaying.'"

"A year ago this kind of system was the fairest that we could find anywhere in the world. I still stand by that, absolutely." Anne Golden, January 17, 1997.

"Finally, a provincial government has mustered the courage to fix Ontario's broken and discredited property tax system.... The current system so violates the principle of fairness and equity that it must be fixed. It's time to accept these overdue reforms." Those great supporters of ours, the Toronto Star editorial, on January 17, 1997.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The member for Prescott and Russell, I don't think you realize that you were not in your seat. I didn't realize it either. I know you wanted to put your point forward, but not that forward.

Further debate?

**Mr Gerretsen:** Does that mean, Mr Speaker, he can give his speech again from the proper seat that he's now in?



First of all, Mr Speaker, I believe there's unanimous consent to stand down our opening 90-minute speaker until a later date.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Is there unanimous consent? Agreed.

**Mr Gerretsen:** This debate reminds me of an election that I was involved in in 1982 when we brought in market value assessment in the Kingston area. Let me tell you right off the bat — we did this just prior to an election — that this is an absolute no-win situation for whoever is involved in this, because at the end of the exercise the people whose taxes are going up will tell you, "We've always paid too much," and, "I told you so," and the people whose taxes are going down will say, "I always told you that I was paying too much, that I should be paying a lot less." The ones whose taxes are going up will say, "You're a nice guy but no thanks to you."

The other thing that ought to be clearly placed on the record right at the outset is that about 75 of the municipalities throughout Ontario already are on some sort of market value assessment system and certainly it is not going to change that drastically for them.

I think there's an awful lot of confusion about this, by the way. We're talking about market value assessment, we're talking about actual value assessment and now we've got a new term in this legislation, which is "current value assessment." I think the people of Ontario are extremely confused about it. Yes, we want fairness, but they also want to see the studies that the government actually has on how this will affect different areas of the province, how it will affect different properties in the province.

If I can again refer back to the experience that I had some 13 or 14 years ago, it seemed to me that even the studies that were available at that time in my particular municipal situation really undervalued or underscored or understated the effect that the new system was going to have on the taxpayers. I would just warn the people of Ontario, watch out, because this is a real big one and this is one that can really affect them to a much greater extent than they will ever think.

I again plead with the government, plead with the Minister of Finance, who is still in the House today, release the impact studies. Obviously you know what the impact of this change is going to be throughout Ontario. Why don't you let the people of Ontario know how the property taxes in their particular situations are going to change so that they can make an informed judgement as to whether or not they're in favour of this kind of change?

1530

Of course the other thing we have to keep in mind is that this is all part of a giant scheme by the government to transfer certain costs to the provincial level, such as the education taxes on the residential property taxpayers, and download a whole bunch of other services to the local municipal level.

I think it's fair to say that just about every writer or every study that's ever been done on this situation, whether it's from the left or from the right, clearly indicates that the kind of downloading that this govern-

ment's involved in, downloading health care and social services to the local municipality, negates and says you should not do that.

What you've really done here with respect to all of your downloading legislation is, you've taken certain costs, costs that are much more predictable, such as education, residential tax costs and —

**Mr Turnbull:** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: It seems to me that perhaps the honourable member should be addressing this bill, which is the Fair Municipal Finance Act.

**The Deputy Speaker:** I notice on many occasions members take a little while to warm up to the topic, so I'll give him a chance. I'll just wait patiently. I know that he got the message and I hope that he will speak to the bill.

**Mr Gerretsen:** But, Mr Speaker, I have been speaking to this bill because one of the downloaded costs to the local municipalities that the Minister of Finance talked about in his speech was this whole integration of farm tax rebates and other rebates at the local level, and from a document here it clearly indicates that even according to the government's own figures \$165 million that used to be paid out by the province in farm tax rebates is now being downloaded to municipalities.

**Hon Noble Villeneuve (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, minister responsible for francophone affairs):** That's not the case.

**Mr Gerretsen:** That is the case because —  
*Interjections.*

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order. There is a period afterwards which we call questions and comments. Wait for that time to voice your opinion. In the meantime, the member for Kingston and The Islands has the floor.

**Mr Gerretsen:** Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. Let me go through the whole list, just so that the people of Ontario clearly know what costs the province is taking over and what costs are being downloaded on local municipalities.

The total benefits to communities and local taxpayers; these are the costs that are being taken off the property tax roll. Education residential tax burden removed, \$5.4 billion. I think there's pretty well widespread agreement on that.

Now we get to the other side of the equation: Programs to be fully downloaded on to municipalities. First of all, community police financing, \$180 million; integration of farm tax rebate and other rebates to local taxes, \$165 million; property assessment services — and I'll get back to that a little later on — \$120 million; social housing, \$890 million; municipal transit and GO Transit services, \$395 million; community libraries, \$20 million; community public health, \$225 million; community ambulance services, \$200 million; homes for special care, \$25 million; community ferries and municipal airport services, \$15 million.

That gets back to the question that I raised in the House earlier today, where in effect over 3,000 permanent island residents throughout the province, in my riding and in other ridings as well, have been told that their ferry services that have been subsidized by the province of Ontario for the last 30 or 40 years will no



longer be done and in order for those people to retain the services they've traditionally had for the last 30 years, they will have to increase their taxes on those islands anywhere from five- to 10-fold if they want to maintain their services.

That's another cost of service that you've downloaded on the municipal taxpayer, and the Premier said so here today in the House in answer to my question. He said, "Well, the local tax base will just have to pay that." In a lot of these situations the amount of local taxes raised by the islanders is somewhere in the neighbourhood of \$100,000 to \$350,000 per year and they will just have to absorb the \$1 million, \$2 million or \$3 million now that it will cost to retain the ferry services, which they can never, never afford. You know it and I know it, and certainly those people who are directly affected know it as well.

But let's go on. Programs that will now be funded 50% by municipalities as opposed to the 20% that was their traditional model: social assistance, \$2.655 billion will be downloaded on to municipalities; child care, \$270 million; long-term care, \$1.150 billion, for a total of \$6.3 billion. Just so we have it clearly established, you're taking \$5.4 billion off the property tax roll for education services and you're adding \$6.3 billion on for costs for services that are basically health care, social care related.

We all know that we live in a society in which we're aging, a rapidly aging society where a lot of these costs, which are much less predictable than education costs, will cost a lot more as time goes along. The province has done a real fast one here, as far as I'm concerned. They've downloaded those costs that they know they really have no control over and that are going to increase over the next four to five years. So yes, this is directly related to what the Minister of Finance was talking about earlier.

The other thing that is very interesting is the property assessment services which are being transferred to the local municipalities to the tune of \$120 million. The minister said the municipalities will know how to do these services best. Let's just go back in time a little. Why was it that in the early 1970s the province actually took over the assessment functions from local municipalities? The main reason was that local municipalities weren't able to handle it. There was always a feeling around that there would be too much pressure on the local officials in the local municipal halls etc to look after the assessment services, and the only way we could get a uniform system across Ontario was in effect to have a system that was provincially controlled and operated.

I dare say that if you talk to most of the people who have been involved in the system over the last 25 years and who were also involved in the system before that, they will say that with the province taking over the assessment function a number of years ago, this was a positive thing. It took the politics out of the local assessment situation. What you're doing is re-entering that, because I can assure you there are going to be a great number of disparities and a great number of struggles that people are going to have with whether a property should be assessed on this basis or that basis, by people who may be integrally involved in the various communities

throughout the province, and that it may be very difficult to establish a true current value system that you're talking about here.

I would like the Minister of Finance to explain to the people of Ontario why a system that his previous government introduced in 1970, a provincial tax assessment system — why have they now decided to step away from it? Is it because they are stepping away from all responsibility towards municipalities? Is that really what he's saying, that they really can't be bothered, that municipalities should just run their own ships, their own affairs?

It's very interesting. We discussed a bill here yesterday, Bill 107, which of course is very much tied into these bills as well. That bill basically said that 25% of the municipal water and sewer services that are owned by the province should be downloaded on to municipalities. It's basically telling local municipalities: "From now on the plant is yours. Whatever the charges are against those plants that still have to be paid off are yours. You could even privatize it, because there's no prohibition in that particular act that you can't privatize it."

The question we have to ask is, why were these plants not owned by the municipalities before? The reason they weren't owned by the municipalities before is that those municipalities could never afford the capital costs in building these plants.

It seems to me that if there's one thing that a government is responsible for, whether we're talking about the federal government, a provincial government or indeed a local government within its own sphere of responsibilities, it is to make sure there are certain basic services available to all of the residents in the province. The kind of grant and subsidy programs that were set up originally to build these water and sewer plants in the smaller communities that couldn't afford to build them with their own resources in those days were good programs. It allowed good water and good sewer facilities to be built in areas that simply otherwise would not have been available.

To download that on to municipalities is just another place where the province is saying, and as a matter of fact, the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Environment and Energy said on a couple of occasions yesterday, "We think it's a local responsibility and the local taxpayers should just pay for it, and I guess if the answer is they can't afford it, let them raise the taxes and it's no longer our responsibility." This is exactly the same thing that you're doing here with the assessment function and it's exactly the same thing that you're doing with all the other programs you're downloading to the local municipal level.

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I can well see a system and a situation in Ontario not too far in the future where we'll have all sorts of different standards in different areas of public policy because some municipalities will be able to pay for services and other municipalities will not.

What is the next step? Is the next step a lowering of provincial standards so that, for example, if you are a municipality that may be hard hit by a plant closure and there's a run on the municipal finances for social services costs, a municipality will then be allowed to lower the



amount of money they're paying, for example for welfare or for certain services, because after all, the municipal tax base can't afford the tremendous additional costs that will have been loaded on because of the plant closure etc?

We're creating a province of have and have-not communities. I certainly have some great concerns about it and so do an awful lot of other people.

It's very interesting that the Minister of Finance quoted two or three individuals who were in favour of some of these things that were happening, who were in favour of the fair tax assessment act that's now being proposed in Bill 106. But let's just read quotations from some of the other people across Ontario who are knowledgeable in this area, what they have to say about the downloading that's taking place.

Let's listen to Terry Mundell, the president of the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, who on January 18 in the *Globe and Mail* was quoted as saying, "The government of the province has said that, quite frankly, we need to get the fiscal house in order and the group to get that in order is the municipal sector because they're giving us all the services and all the work to do." In other words, half the municipalities pay for Mike Harris's income tax cut. That's really what it all boils down to.

Let's talk about what a councillor, Joe Swan, said in the *London Free Press*. He said, "If the public ever wanted to know how Mr Harris is going to pay for his 30% tax cut, they've just heard it." This is part of that picture.

Thunder Bay mayor David Hamilton, on January 17 of this year in the *Chronicle-Journal*, said, "Locally, you're going to pay more taxes and get nothing new."

Ottawa-Carleton regional chair Peter Clark, in the *Ottawa Citizen* on January 23, said: "This is very serious. What (the provincial government) has done is a massive intrusion into local government."

Sudbury councillor Peter Dow said, "We are going to be snowed."

Here we have the president of the Board of Trade of Metropolitan Toronto, who said, "We do not believe it is reasonable to hold local councils responsible for social service costs that arise from economic conditions over which they have little control." That's what this is all about. That's what all this downloading is about.

Moody's, the bond rating service, on January 25 in the *Globe and Mail* said, "...municipalities may find it necessary to make significant adjustments to property taxes, which could ultimately result in a less competitive tax regime."

Brantford mayor Chris Friel, on January 25 in the *Brantford Expositor* said, "They're insulting the intelligence of every taxpayer in the province," talking about the current government.

Belleville mayor Ross McDougall, in the *Belleville Intelligencer* on January 15, 1997, said: "It is wrong...(this) will hurt everyone," talking about downloading.

Hamilton-Wentworth regional chairman Terry Cooke, referring to how local taxes there may jump by 15%, stated in the *Hamilton Spectator* on January 21: "Not in my wildest imagination could I have contemplated this kind of impact. It certainly is unprecedented and it's cause for very grave concern."

Now, here's an interesting one. I hope she's in the House. Yes, she is in the House. Progressive Conservative MPP Lillian Ross for Hamilton West, commenting on the impact on the region of Hamilton-Norfolk, is reported to have said in the *Hamilton Spectator* on January 27, 1997 — and she's in the House and she can contradict this during the two-minute response if she so wishes — "I'm very concerned about it. I don't want to see it happen." Isn't that something. I have the highest regard and respect for that member because she's at least prepared to make an intelligent comment about some of the horrible things that this government is doing, and I salute my colleague in taking that position.

My own city treasurer in the city of Kingston, Rick Fiebig, said: "On our own there's no doubt we would be virtually bankrupt as a result of the downloading." That's what he said. This is not a partisan hack. This is not a party member. This is the city treasurer who has reviewed all the expenditures that you're taking off and all the expenditures you're adding on the property tax roll, and he's saying, "On our own there's no doubt we would be virtually bankrupt." He commented on the estimated \$20 million the city will face as a result of this downloading exercise.

Paul Pagnuelo of the Canadian Taxpayers Federation — he used to be one of the favourite people that the government quoted all the time; they were on their side and they agreed with just about everything, but look what he says about all this downloading: "The government of Ontario is playing a shell game with taxpayers. A tax cut is not a tax cut when one level of government simply shifts the spending burden to another level of government, and that's the bottom line."

The bottom line is that the provincial government wants to look good by charging less income tax so that we can all pay more — about \$500 or \$600, I've heard from various sources, more per taxpayer in the province on property taxes as a result of all these changes.

Let's just hear what Sault Ste Marie mayor Steve Butland said on January 15 of this year. He stated: "We have been anticipating some dramatic downloading or transition of responsibility, but this is almost beyond comprehension." Another mayor, another person who has looked at these situations and is saying that this is the wrong thing to do.

Don Wackley of the Ontario Coalition of Senior Citizens' Organizations stated right here at Queen's Park on January 30 of this year: "The Ontario government is dismantling Ontario's social security system unilaterally without any public consultation. The government has autocratically decided to push many social programs and services on to the municipalities without foresight and the thought of the negative impact on communities and municipal taxpayers."

What the finance minister is now doing is saying: "We're bringing in current value assessment and everybody will be happy. Look at all the winners here." But he doesn't talk about any of the losers. Let's face it, this whole exercise is supposedly revenue-neutral.

What does the medical officer, Robin Bolton, with the Sudbury District Health Unit, have to say? He stated in *Northern Life* on February 2 of this year: "This down-



loading plan is going to set public health back by 60 years in this province." Because what's going to happen is the next level of this exercise is that the provincial standards by which taxpayers and residents of this province can anticipate certain definite standards, whether we're talking about health care, whether we're talking about social services, whether we're talking about many of the other services that are provided either directly or indirectly by the provincial government, are going to suffer and we're going to have different standards across the province. I don't think that's the kind of province we want to live in.

It's kind of ironic that here we are in a country that is rated the number one country in the world as far as the United Nations is concerned from a standard of living and a quality of life viewpoint. Two years in a row we've been voted that way. And what are we doing? We are now in effect making the rich richer and the poor poorer, because we're no longer insisting on those standards that went a long way in making the good quality of life we all enjoy — standards that have been brought in both at the provincial and federal level and at the local level — because we're no longer going to insist on that in the future as far as these changes are concerned.

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Hamilton Mayor Bob Morrow stated in the Hamilton Spectator on Friday, January 31, "We fear evolution to a dysfunctional government and community if certain things stand," again referring to the downloading that's taking place here.

I'm quoting here from the Ottawa Citizen of January 23, Ottawa-Carleton regional councillor Gord Hunter. He said — and I'm not saying this; I'm just repeating what this man said — "They are either lying to the people of Ontario or they have a pathological intelligence deficit." That's the kind of language that I would never use, but this man has studied these changes and he's come to that conclusion. I can tell you that is quite a —

**Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Environment and Energy):** On a point of privilege, Mr Speaker: Is this the same Gord Hunter who was a Liberal candidate in the past?

**The Deputy Speaker:** This is not a point of privilege. Please take your seat.

**Mr Gerretsen:** Let me make it quite —

*Interjections.*

**Mr Garry J. Guzzo (Ottawa-Rideau):** Defeated Liberal candidate —

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order. The member for Ottawa Rideau, if you want to make some remarks, just wait. After the speech.

**Mr Gerretsen:** All I can say is that it is very nice to see every one of these government members who are in the House paying full attention to this, because it doesn't always happen in this House. Obviously these words and these remarks and these quotations are having some effect. I don't know whether this gentleman was a Liberal candidate or not, and quite frankly I couldn't care whether he was. This is still a statement from a regional councillor, who obviously is the closest to the people in the sense that he knows how these programs are going to have an effect in his particular municipality, and he's come to this conclusion.

I haven't mentioned the politics of any one of these people, other than the member here in the House, your own member, Lillian Ross, and let me just repeat it. What did she say? She said, "I'm concerned about it. I don't want to see it happen." I want to be here on the day when we vote on this legislation and stand up with the member for Hamilton West, opposing this government. I think that would be a great idea and we would all more than welcome her voting with us on that, as would of course many of the people in the province of Ontario.

The chief administrator of La Salle in the Windsor Star of February 1, Ken Antaya, said: "The rich will get richer and the poor will get poorer as a result of this downloading."

I could go on and on. We have figures here from municipal sources as to how they're going to be affected as a result of this downloading. As I've already said, in the city of Kingston it's \$23 million that will have to be raised on the property tax roll. In Brantford it's \$23 million; in London it's \$57 million, which means a 17% property tax jump; Cornwall \$10 million; Thunder Bay \$15 million; Timmins \$12 million, which means a 30% property tax jump; Peterborough \$13 million, a 35% property tax jump; Orillia \$2 million; in the town of Owen Sound, \$2 million; Gravenhurst \$12 million; Metropolitan Toronto \$530 million, which means a property tax increase of about \$419 per residential or \$7,900 for the commercial property taxpayers; the region of Sudbury \$105 million; Hamilton-Wentworth, an increase of \$121 million, which translates into an 18% property tax jump.

Mr Speaker, I ask you, and I ask the members of the government, are all these people wrong? Have they all figured it out wrong? These are municipal people who have actually taken a look at the program costs last year, based on the old system, and have transposed the new system that you're introducing in these various pieces of legislation on to it and they've all come to the same conclusion: that in their municipalities taxes are going to rise tremendously. Are they all wrong and only you've got it right?

I somehow doubt it, particularly when you take into account a number of the other bills you're putting through as well whereby you're downloading more and more on municipalities and you're making it sound as if they're getting something.

There was something that happened here yesterday, for example, on Bill 107 in which I raised a question which still hasn't been answered. If it is such a good idea to in effect download and give the municipalities the water and sewer services that are currently owned by the province, why is the province making this mandatory? If it was really helping the local municipal taxpayers or the local municipalities, if they were to benefit from them, you don't have to make that program mandatory; the municipalities will be lining up by the minister's door and saying: "Yes, I want to be part of this. Give me the keys to the plant. I'll look after everything from now on. I will pay the debt charges, because I'm winning by it."

It just seems to me if you're mandating that the local municipalities take over these plants whether they want to or not and you're not giving them any option at all, it



means only one thing: There are situations out there where the municipalities simply don't want it because it's going to cost them more in tax dollars to look after the capital financing of these plants and after the day-to-day maintenance costs as well.

I see my time is almost up and we've only barely touched the surface of this particular bill. I would just once again implore the Minister of Finance, and I'm very pleased to see that he has been in the House throughout this exercise, if you think this is such a great idea and if you truly want the people of Ontario to have an accurate knowledge base as to what this current value assessment system is all about, why don't you release your studies that indicate that this is a win situation for the property taxpayers in Ontario? Do it, and I think we will all make much more intelligent decisions than we are currently doing.

Mr Speaker, thank you very much for your attention, and the attention of the members opposite.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Questions or comments?

**Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie):** I just wanted to, in the two minutes I have, suggest that the member for Kingston and The Islands makes some very interesting and important points as we look at this piece of legislation. It's also important to say that we have to be careful in this House and across this province to never take anything this government presents as something that stands alone. It is all part of a larger plan that will at the end of the day see some very simple things happen in this province. It will see this government spending less money on services like health care and social services and policing and roads and ambulance and clean water, and the list goes on and on.

To what end do we do this? We do this so we can clear the way for the private sector, their friends and benefactors, to come in and reap mega-profits. What this is about — and we hear the word "mega" used a lot around this place these days — is mega-money, mega-profits, mega-return on investment for the business sector and ultimately, at the end of the day, yes, for the people of Ontario mega-disaster.

However, it's important to note too, and anybody in this place who spends any time at home in their constituencies, who spends time listening to people in communication with their municipal councils will know that they're not getting away with it. Slowly but surely the lights are going on and people are beginning to understand. In my own community of Sault Ste Marie, there was an article in the Sault Star today and the headline was "City Councillors Want No Part in Province's Welfare Overhaul." They understand what this is all about. They understand that even though there are some positive pieces about changing the way we assess property tax, at the end of the day it's about cutting services for people.

**Mrs Lillian Ross (Hamilton West):** In light of the fact that the member for Kingston and The Islands made mention of me, I thought it only appropriate that I stand in my place to comment on his comments.

When we were discussing this issue in Hamilton-Wentworth, what I said to the press — and it's interesting how everything plays out in the press, as members here

will realize; sometimes what's said in the press is not necessarily what you've said — was if in fact it proves that taxes in Hamilton-Wentworth jump by as much as 400%, that is frightening to people and of major concern, and I would be as concerned about that as any member in this House would be.

**1600**

What I also said was that we are taking off of the taxpayers the burden of an ever-increasing tax — the education tax — and replacing it with something that was decreasing, which was the social welfare caseload. We talked a lot about the transfer of funding and what we're replacing it with.

We also talked about the fact that this was a revenue-neutral exercise. If it was not, we had ensured that municipalities had funds that they could tap into and a municipal social reserve fund that they could tap into, if in unforeseen times they would need those services.

We also said that there was a capital and operating restructuring fund for municipalities to tap into and a community reinvestment fund. We looked at some of those circumstances so that we could help municipalities that were facing unforeseen tax increases.

We also said that if taxes were to rise, they could be phased in over a period of eight years, allowing taxpayers the opportunity to adjust for those things. In my opinion, this is the fairest tax system for people in this province.

**Mr Frank Miclash (Kenora):** I'd like to congratulate the member for Kingston and The Islands for providing us with an overview of what's being dumped on the municipalities in his area. As the member's indicated, if the government has these impact studies to show us what it's going to cost municipalities, we have to get those. We have to be able to present those, present the government view. I know these studies have to be out there; we just can't seem to get our hands on those.

I'm hearing a lot of what the member for Kingston and The Islands has heard in his region in my region of northern Ontario as well, throughout northwestern Ontario. Only this past weekend, I sat with the Kenora District Municipal Association at its meeting. There wasn't one municipality in that room that would suggest that this was going to be revenue-neutral, was going to be something that they could depend on that was not going to cost their individual taxpayers more money.

As a matter of fact, Kenora, Keewatin and Jaffray Melick, the trimunicipal area, have come up with a study which shows that it's going to cost each resident, each household in those three municipalities some \$600 more for the services that have been dumped on their municipalities. As the vice-president of the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, Michael Power, has indicated — people will know Michael is from northern Ontario; he has travelled the north entirely — has not yet found one municipality that finds this dumping to be revenue-neutral.

So when they come out with this word "fair," the Fair Municipal Finance Act, I would like the minister to tell me of one municipality in this province that actually thinks this is fair to them. I haven't found one yet, Mr Minister, and I would like you to come up with one municipality that will tell us that this is fair to them.



I would just again like to congratulate the member for Kingston and The Islands on what he's hearing from his municipalities, similar to what I'm hearing in the north.

**Mr Marchese:** The member for Kingston and The Islands had a whole chorus of people who talked about some of the concerns they have, and they're quite legitimate. I suspect that if more people had time, that chorus and litany would grow, because there are concerns around this. Although it's called the Fair Municipal Finance Act, at least that's the way that you refer to it, there's some unfairness in all of this.

The sad tragedy of it all is that there are a lot of people who don't have a clue they're about to be whacked by a property tax increase. That's the sad thing, because you have people owning homes, who bought homes whenever they might have bought them, never knowing that at some point down the line a government would say, "Folks, it's about time that you paid your property taxes fairly, because you haven't been paying enough."

So the poor people down here in Metro are saying: "My God, I don't have any parking. Every time I park here or on the other side of the street, I get a parking ticket. We have nothing but a lot of disservice in our community and we're about to be whacked by this government with property tax increases."

Seniors don't have a clue, but don't worry, municipalities are now given the power to defer them. This is enabling legislation that permits municipalities to do this, but not necessarily so.

Small businesses are not going to be helped by this. Golden understood that seniors would be hit, and small business would be hit in particular, and asked this government, if they ever did it, to set money aside. Well, this government is magnanimous. They're saying: "We're going to ask the municipalities to deal with this. We think it's a problem, so we're going to pass on this obligation to the municipalities to fix it because we recognize it's a particular problem." How magnanimous of this government to pass that on.

There are built-in unfairnesses in this bill and people will feel them when the time comes.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The member for Kingston and The Islands, you have two minutes.

**Mr Gerretsen:** I'd like to thank the members for Sault Ste Marie, Fort York, Hamilton West and Kenora for their comments. The member for Hamilton West says this is revenue-neutral, all this dumping. The point is, it's \$5.4 billion that you're taking off, \$6.3 billion that you're adding on. Then you've set up \$1-billion community reinvestment fund. Every time I've spoken to one of the government members over the last month or so, since this first came out, they've all said, "We tell people, 'Apply to the community investment fund.'" I am sure that there are about 10 applications for every dollar you can fund under this program.

The other thing you've got to remember is that the government is saying is that by putting this \$1 billion back on, it is revenue-neutral, that as much is going off as is coming on. The problem is that this \$1 billion includes the \$666 million in the municipal support grant program that has been discontinued. In other words, you've got a program here that you're discontinuing and

then you're adding it back into the community reinvestment fund, making it sound as if this is new money that's being put out. You're only putting \$334 million in actual new money out there.

The point is, Mr Finance Minister, do the right thing. Bring out the studies. You've done the studies. I'm sure that you're a competent minister and that you did all your studies before you got involved in any of these down-loading exercises. Let the people of Ontario see those studies. Give them the studies so that they can determine for themselves whether they're going to gain or lose as a result of this exercise. The question has been asked a number of times in the House here. So far you haven't produced anything at all. Is it because the studies agree with what we're saying on this side of the House?

**The Deputy Speaker:** Further debate?

**Mr Marchese:** It's a pleasure to have an opportunity, at least an hour and a half, to speak to Bill 106, because there's a lot to say about this particular bill. It's always a pleasure to have the time to be able to speak to these bills.

I want first of all to talk about the name of the bill and link it to a whole other number of bills. Speaking to the title is critical because it gives the public a sense of what this government is trying to do by the way it names its bills. Mr Ernie Eves refers to this particular bill as the Fair Municipal Finance Act.

The reason I raise this is because there is always something beneath the title that people need to see. Of course, it's always invisible. Unless you read the bill, you'll never really have a clue, but the bill is intended to communicate something other than that which it is.

I refer to one of the bills they have already passed which was called the Job Quotas Repeal Act. This was the employment equity bill that we had passed, and when they repealed this bill, the government titled it the Job Quotas Repeal Act. Why do I make this point? I make the point because the title is really very misleading. It has nothing to do with the actual facts.

There were never any quotas in that particular bill but this government knew in its pre-election campaigning that it was important to talk about that bill, the employment equity bill, as a quota bill. They knew that it would have a tremendous feel and resonance with the public if they didn't say it was the repealing of the Employment Equity Act, because that would be too boring, but rather called it what the public believed it was, which is what this government said, and that is the Job Quotas Repeal Act. That's all the public needs to know. They don't have to read it. As far as they're concerned, this government has done its job, so they have eliminated an offensive bill, in their minds, which had quotas built into it and they solved it.

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I do this because I want to be able to give you a fairly good sense of the title of the bill versus what it actually was, and in this particular case they had done a very good job of hiding the real content of employment equity with that particular title.

I move on to others. There are actually quite a few, because this government is quite skilled at having a propagandist style of leadership. There's another called Employment Standards Improvement Act. We have



argued here, and my colleague from Hamilton has argued strongly, that there's no improvement in the Employment Standards Act; it is an impoverishment of the Employment Standards —

**Mr Turnbull:** This has nothing to do with the bill.

**Mr Marchese:** I realize it doesn't. I'm linking the various bills to give you a sense of why the titles have meaning underneath, and you've got to look at that. The Employment Standards Improvement Act does not improve the standards act; it diminishes and downgrades it.

I know, David, you're having a hard time through this but you've got to pay attention.

The Fewer Politicians Act: The title, again, has resonance with the Reform public this party represents. They say: "How do we title something so that without having to get into the detail of a bill, we've communicated a whole picture of what this party is all about? We, the Reform-Party-obsessed Conservative Party, are going to call this the Fewer Politicians Act because we know the public out there says, 'Yes, the more politicians out of office the better.'"

That's what you're catering to. You know that. You've done your polling. That's how you won your election, based on these kinds of understandings of where the public was at. You said, "Let's not call this the How do we get fewer NDP and/or Liberal Politicians Act, but rather Fewer Politicians Act." You wouldn't want to tell the truth, obviously; you would want to mask it in such a way that you have broad appeal with the public.

I know, Monsieur Villeneuve, c'est un peu étrange. Je ne sais pas, mais il y a beaucoup de clarté là-dedans.

I think we'll leave this particular aspect of naming the bills because what I wanted to do —

**Ms Shelley Martel (Sudbury East):** The Tenant Protection Act.

**Mr Marchese:** Oh, the Tenant Protection Act. I forgot all about that. You see, there are many bills.

The Tenant Protection Act is in here, David. I know you're startled but I want to help you out. It's on this last page. The Tenant Protection Act, you remember that one. You went out to the public with the tenant protection package, and when we went out to the hearings, the public said: "There's nothing in it for us. Why did you call it the Tenant Protection Act? In fact, this is a landlord protection act, it's not for us."

You guys came back after three weeks of hearings, you listened to the public and then you brought in a bill that was called the Tenant Protection Act. It was beautiful. You listened for four weeks to people who said —

**Mr Turnbull:** Mr Speaker, on a point of order: It is a tradition that when we're debating interim supply you can talk about anything, but we are actually debating Bill 106, the Fair Municipal Finance Act. It would be good if once in a while the member might direct himself to the —

**The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson):** It is a point of order. I just got in the chair. I've been listening intently to the speaker and I'm sure he will bring himself within the confines of Bill 106.

**Mr Marchese:** I'm happy that you're listening as well. The reason I raise these points is because they are linked.

I know it irritates the members opposite when I raise these points and I know they would rather that we compartmentalize their policies, but for me everything this government does, everything we do in this place, is interconnected. You can't isolate one from the other. I'm going to connect various pieces to what this government is doing because they interconnect and not to allude to them would be a serious problem.

I'm glad you're listening because I argue that I am making a point very much linked to this particular bill. I was at the point of explaining that the Tenant Protection Act had nothing in it for tenants, yet this government has the gall to title it something other than what it is.

Why did they do it? It's propagandist. It's part of a propaganda.

*Interjection.*

**Mr Marchese:** Dave, sorry, I can't hear you. I didn't hear that, David. You have to speak up.

It's propagandist, and the title of this, the Fair Municipal Finance Act, is also propagandist because it creates the sense to a whole lot of people out there that they're about to be whacked by fairness.

**Mr David Tilson (Dufferin-Peel):** Remember the Fair Tax Commission?

**Mr Marchese:** I'm about to get a \$1,000 property tax increase and I'm about to be whacked by fairness, as if getting a property tax increase has anything to do with fairness. I know the member for St Andrew-St Patrick will agree with me on this because quite a number of her constituents are absolutely worried about the implications it will have.

Some will argue, "Maybe there is some fairness because some people are very, very wealthy and they haven't been paying their fair share." Perhaps for some that might be the case, but in the riding I represent we have a mix of people. They're very working class, and yes, we have a professional category of people who are earn a good salary, but by and large most people do not.

When you are about to whack people with your fair property tax increase, I'm not sure they're going to find it all that pleasant. Then we'll find Mr Eves coming to those folks saying: "We're sorry, sir, on Beatrice Street, you haven't been paying enough." The man has been paying \$2,000. He thinks he's paying a whole lot of property taxes, but Mr Eves, the finance minister, says: "Uh-uh, you haven't been paying enough. It's not fair." The man is saying: "What do you mean? We're paying a lot of property taxes in this place for this building in this downtown area and you're about to hit me with fairness." I tell you it's a problem.

**Ms Isabel Bassett (St Andrew-St Patrick):** Some people are paying \$4,000.

**Mr Marchese:** Some people pay \$4,000 next door. No. Maybe in your neck of the woods they do, but in my neck of the woods they do not.

*Interjection.*

**Mr Marchese:** The member for St Andrew-St Patrick is going to have an opportunity to speak and I will listen to her intently when she does because I'm sure she has a lot to say. A lot of people in her riding want her to speak up on behalf of those constituencies, and I will listen intently to the arguments she's going to submit to this House.



I want to move on. I've got a document here, a memorandum to the assessment commissioner, from Elizabeth Patterson, the assistant deputy minister, property assessment.

"Subject: Ministry request for private sector assistance."

"Attached is a document called Request for Qualifications, which is being issued on September 11 in respect of the province-wide reassessment."

"The ministry is aware that the division cannot deliver the reassessment in the time frame set by the government and still carry out day-to-day assessment operations with its current permanent staff."

"We have up to 360 person-years of divisional valuation staff time and that can be made available to work with the private sector suppliers who are bidding on this particular project."

"We do not wish to give you any restrictions" — to a question from one of the people who was at that briefing — "however, it is not the intention of the ministry to hire 1,000 suppliers to complete the project. We want to find the best suppliers to carry out this project. With a tight deadline, the ministry wants to select the most efficient way of doing the project and will be making a selection or selections of bidders within the budget allocated to do the work."

I was looking at the time lines.

"Proponents should be aware of the following key dates and realize that the overall delivery time lines are not flexible: September 18, 1996, briefing date; October 7, 1996, submission deadline; October 28, 1996, short-listed proponents contacted; November 6, 1996, request for proposals issued to short-listed proponents; January 13, 1997, request for proposal submission deadline; February 12, 1997, suggested proponents picked."

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I raise this because I'm not sure you've been able to find any private sector group that has come forward to do it. I am concerned, and that's why I asked you the question two weeks ago, about whether or not we have the staff and/or the expertise and time within your time frame to do a job that is not only adequate but efficient and proficient enough that we could feel secure that the job you're about to engage yourself in will be done in a way that will be in the public interest overall. I am very concerned about all of this and I'm not sure quite sure whether you are. I suspect you are, but I'm not sure I've heard anything coming from your mouth that has convinced me that we have either the time or the expertise or that we have had a private sector bidder bid on this proposal.

Your friend Mr Pagnuelo issued an interesting report called The Property Tax Assessment Reform. He is alerted to the same worry that I have around this. This is what he says on page 6 of this interesting document:

"In order to make this turkey fly" — that's what he calls it — "the provincial assessment division has convinced Mr Leach that the job can be done without the Harris government being stung in the process. Despite assurances that it can be delivered on time, on cost and with a high degree of integrity using its own resources and contract staff, the private sector was also invited to bid on all or part of the project."

It's the biggest reassessment project ever in North America, costing almost \$61 million, for openers. It probably will be more, but that's the ultimate figure, Monsieur Eves?

*Interjection.*

**Mr Marchese:** Oh, you're bringing it down.

**Hon Mr Eves:** We are an efficient government.

**Mr Marchese:** It's so typical of this efficient government, bringing everything down, harmonizing downward all the time. What with great efficiency, everything comes down. It is beautiful. Harmonizing everything downwards. It's a mark of respect of this government; it's a mark of achievement to bring everything downwards. I'm sure you're proud of it.

**Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre):** Health care, education, labour standards.

**Ms Martel:** Environmental standards.

**Mr Marchese:** Labour standards, health care, the loss of hospitals, environmental standards, jobs, more part-time jobs than full-time — God, I don't know.

It's the biggest reassessment project ever in North America. Province-wide reassessment involves the evaluation of over 3.8 million properties, 5.5 million structures and 5.6 million assessable units, all within a time frame of 18 months. Some of this might be easy to do in the GTA, but I tell you, some of the properties that have to be assessed outside the GTA are much more complicated than in the GTA, therefore leaving you with a very difficult task, without the resources, the time and possibly the money or the expertise to do this.

Mr Eves, I want you to listen to this one, because I think it's useful. "With millions on the table up for grabs, one would expect private sector firms to be tripping over themselves for a piece of the action, and yet they aren't. But surprise," says Monsieur Pagnuelo, "sources reveal that because the process is so fundamentally flawed and guaranteed to fail, many in the private sector are shunning the project."

This, to me, is of interest, because I am very concerned that given that —

**Hon Mr Eves:** Now that you and Paul are soul-mates —

**Mr Marchese:** He's your friend. That's why I raised this point, because he's a person who was your friend. I know Mr Crombie was your friend as well. You pick friends up and you lose them along the way; I don't know. Perhaps it happens; I'm not sure.

I raise this because he's a tax fighter, like you guys. He raises these points because he's very worried about property tax increases, he's worried that this might be a flawed system, he's worried that the private sector that you have invited to bid on this project hasn't come forward. We've had a lot of experts. You've invited people from all over Canada and I believe from the US as well.

People from British Columbia who have the expertise to do this actual value assessment I believe have declined to accept your invitation here, and there's a lot of millions of dollars at stake. For them not to bid on this leads me to conclude that we've got a problem on our hands. If the experts within Canada, and presumably some experts outside in the US, are refusing to bid on



this project, what does it tell you, Monsieur Finance Minister? That you've got a problem.

If you don't have a problem, tell us. Tell us how you have fixed this particular problem, because I know that you have strange powers of alchemy. I know that you can do that. Like the 17th century alchemist, you guys are fascinating. You create miracles out of nothing. I know that in this particular piece here, experts haven't been able to bid on this project, but with your sense of omnipotence, omniscience as well, you will be able to pull something out of a hat once again.

I want to hear from you, Mr Eves, to reassure people like me and Monsieur Pagnuelo, your former friend, and others about what is happening in this particular field, because they're worried, I'm worried, and there are a lot of people worried. You heard the member for Kingston and The Islands, who raised a chorus of people who have some concerns about this, so assure them.

Let me try to tackle a few other aspects of the bill as well. There are a number of things I want to talk about. I know that I won't be able to fully cover all of the components of this particular bill, but this is an important one; the one that I just raised is an important one. You may want to push it aside and pretend it's not a big issue, but that is a big issue.

If people are listening, I urge you to write to the finance minister and say: "Mr Eves, we heard Mr Marchese raising this particular concern. Could you send us something in writing and reassure us that everything is okay, that we can go back to bed and we can sleep peacefully at night and everything is all right." Please write him a letter, private and confidential so that it gets into his big financial hands, so that he can give you a response to your particular concerns.

Monsieur le finance minister has also spoken about the business occupancy tax, and he brings this with a great deal of fanfare and satisfaction as well. The business occupancy tax is paid by the business operating out of a property rather than the property owner. That comes from your document, Mr Eves, and it says here, "When the business occupancy tax was devised in 1904, the different rates applicable to different kinds of businesses were intended to be a proxy for the amount of personal property owned. These classifications are no longer current and the business occupancy tax no longer makes sense."

What has he done? He says municipalities will be empowered — interestingly, he's empowering municipalities — to decide whether or not to recover the equivalent municipal revenues from any or all property classes in the form of realty tax on property owners. "Converting the BTO to a realty tax will mean that property owners, not tenants, will pay the tax." The essence of this is that \$1.6 billion will be taken out of the municipalities' hands. In Metropolitan Toronto it constitutes about \$600 million.

**Hon Mr Eves:** They have the power to collect all of it back, some of it back —

**Mr Marchese:** Or none of it back.

**Hon Mr Eves:** — distribute it to property taxpayers.

**Mr Marchese:** All right. They're empowered, once having removed this business occupancy tax, which he has done, to somehow make up for that either in full or in part. Very magnanimous of the Minister of Finance.

The minister says, "It's gone; the business occupancy tax is an irrelevancy in the second millennium here and it's about time we eliminated it," but he magnanimously passes this on to the municipalities. He says: "Now boys, you can do what you like, but it's up to you. It's gone now, but you solve it. You can take it out in full or in part or in whatever way you want."

The province gets to claim credit for eliminating business taxes but municipalities get stuck having to figure out how to replace them. Isn't it beautiful? The finance minister finally solves a particular problem but leaves the problem to municipalities. They don't know how much they can move from one class to the other. That has not yet been determined. It will be determined by regulation at some point down the line. The municipalities don't have a clue how to move from one property class to the other, but the essential point is that when you take that money out you've got to replace it somehow. Someone is going to be whacked with a property tax increase.

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**Mr Douglas B. Ford (Etobicoke-Humber):** What expertise do you have?

**Mr Marchese:** Beautiful eloquence on the other side. I don't know who that member is. You see, he says, "I finally figured it out." So, Monsieur whatever, now you know that your minister has eliminated this. You found this out too, or did you know this as well? Did you know —

**Mr Ford:** Billions of dollars —

**Mr Marchese:** Mr Speaker, I'd rather speak to you, actually, because I'm not sure how much intelligence comes forth out of the other side.

**Hon Mr Eves:** You can ask the same people to pay if they want, then lose millions of dollars a year.

**Mr Marchese:** That's a different matter. They take this tax out, magnanimously pass it on to the municipality and it's got to find a way to replace it. They look good and the municipality that has to find the money somehow is going to look really bad. It's going to look really bad in having to do this. It's going to be a problem. If the residential folks are going to be hit with that to replace this particular cost that is being taken out, we've got another serious problem.

What are municipalities going to do? Whom are they going to whack by taking that out? Somebody has to pay, as our illustrious member was pointing out on the other side. Someone has to pay. I don't know who in your community is going to pay, but you in your Etobicoke area are going to have to figure that one out. I'm sure people will be calling you, asking you to help them out because they don't have a clue how to do this. We have a particular problem on our hands to solve with this one.

That's the business occupancy tax. There's a lot one could probably say about this, but I know that Mr Gordon Chong has appeared on TVOntario's Fourth Reading to talk about this issue as well. He explained how the elimination of the business occupancy tax will cost Metro close to \$600 million in lost revenue, and recently Metro Toronto released figures which illustrate that some \$400 million in extra costs were downloaded on them by the Harris government. Add to this the \$600 million lost revenues from the elimination of the business



occupancy tax and Metro is left with a \$1-billion problem. So however they deal with this, it's a big problem.

**Ms Martel:** Is Gordon Chong a friend of yours?

**Mr Marchese:** Gordon Chong used to be a friend as well, but I know that ever since the downloading of services he's become a former friend. They're picking up friends along the way, new ones, I suspect, but they're losing quite a few along the way.

Mike the Taxfighter, if you recall, during the election came with that big bus and roamed and roared across town to town saying, "We're going to fight taxes," but this particular bill brings in a whole new big bus driven by Mike Harris that's going to increase property taxes for a whole lot of people. The sad thing is that they don't know it yet. The sad thing is that a lot of people are about to face a property tax increase and they don't know. They don't know because this government will not tell them. They don't know because this government that has done the studies, has them, refuses to share them with the public, refuses to share them with the opposition, refuses to share them with municipalities and refuses to share them with the general public.

Why would it do that? People have to ask themselves that particular question: Why would the government refuse to release those studies, except and unless for some nefarious purpose? That nefarious purpose is that they know that contained within those studies are a whole lot of people who are going to get tax increases. They know that.

**Hon Mr Eves:** There's no way of knowing what the June 30 values will be.

**Mr Marchese:** They know.

**Hon Mr Eves:** But you know what they will realize and people can make their own comparisons.

**Mr Marchese:** Well, release them. Release what you've got, Mr Eves, and then people can make their own decisions about what you have studied.

**Hon Mr Eves:** You have to assume comparisons between commercial and residential, industrial and residential.

**Mr Marchese:** Release them.

*Interjection.*

**Mr Marchese:** Mr Turnbull, you are going to have an opportunity to speak to your folks in your riding, which is within our Metro boundaries, and you'll be able to intelligently explain, of course, what you're doing. Please. There's plenty of time for that. You've got a whole lot of time.

The Taxfighter is about to give people a tax increase, and the information they've got, I argue, is being withheld. The minister says, "But you don't know how to determine this and that." Well, give us this information. Give the municipalities the information. They know how to work it in based on their own mill rates and what they would do. They have a fairly good sense. They've got experts there as well who can calculate how this will impact on their constituencies, on the working poor, on seniors, on small business people. They have that expertise.

I know the Toronto government, in a submission made by the mayor of Toronto, Barbara Hall, provided a list of properties. They've done their own study to show the impact of provincial downloading, including the impact

of this AVA. However you call it, AVA or MVA — there are some differences, and I've got the chart to show the differences — by and large it's the same thing and by and large it means a property tax increase. They've done a study to show how the conjoint impact of downloading and AVA will affect the various small business people.

A service station will get \$72,000 more in new taxes that they will have to pay; a retail variety store, \$11,000; retail paint and paper, \$6,998; a tavern, \$13,189; retail electronics, \$10,000; a service beauty salon, \$2,272; a retail beauty salon, \$1,771; a retail barber, \$8,000; a retail variety store, \$29,956; retail shoes, \$16,423; hairdresser, \$1,671; dry cleaners, \$23,414; pizza, \$5,955; mailboxes, \$11,865; pet food, \$11,153; and in retail again, cookies, \$3,226.

This is the kind of study they have done. If you haven't seen it, I have the whole binder that the city has provided to the members of the committee dealing with amalgamation, and we can pass it on. They have the experts and the expertise to be able to determine the impact of AVA and the downloading on the property taxpayers of the city of Toronto. This was for small business. Imagine what's going to happen to a lot of property owners who are low-income people; seniors who've owned their homes for a lifetime, or 30, 40, 50 years, never dreaming somehow they would have to face a government that's going to whack them with fairness all of a sudden. You're going to see a lot of people being unfairly done to by this government.

Add to this other complications, because I think everything needs to be seen in context. That's why the city of Toronto has done this study to show the impact of AVA and the downloading, because they do go hand and hand and they both mean property tax increases. If you think you are exempt from property tax increases, you're wrong. M. Eves might say some of you in your riding are going to get a property tax decrease, and then we come back, at least within Metro, and say, "We've done our studies, they've done their studies, to show that although you might benefit, you're about to be whacked by a different type of property tax increase," which I will allude to in a second. Those fine people — poor working people, seniors, injured workers who own homes and many others who are struggling to keep their home, paying the mortgage rates that they do — are going to face a double whack, that is, an increase in property taxes that is due directly to your actual value or market value system and then a double increase when you add to that your mega-dump.

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This government has said, "We're taking the education portion out of property taxes." They said this again with a great deal of personal satisfaction: "We've done what you municipalities have wanted. We've taken that out. We've done what a lot of people out there wanted. We've taken the education portion out."

But you never told them that you were going to take it out and increase the income tax rate, which is what you should have done. You took the education portion out of property taxes and passed on something else, which I find profoundly offensive. You should have funded education out of income tax completely. If you had the courage,



you would have raised income taxes and not property taxes. But you don't have the courage to do that. That's one point.

The other point is, if you wanted to be revenue-neutral, because this is what it's all about, why take education out? If you arrive at the same point, why take it out?

**Mr Peter L. Preston (Brant-Haldimand):** Everybody wants that.

*Interjection.*

**Mr Marchese:** No, it isn't just that. Welfare should not be funded out of property taxes.

**Hon Mr Eves:** It already is by 20%.

**Mr Marchese:** Yes, but you've increased their load by 30%. It's now 50%. So you say education shouldn't be funded out of property taxes, and in the same breath you say, "But welfare can." Oh, because they're already paying it? But if they're paying education already, why not just leave it? If your argument is that they're already paying welfare, it is illogical, because they're already paying for education. If you argue education shouldn't be paid out of property taxes, how could you argue welfare should, Mr Eves? It makes no reasonable, logical sense.

If you arrive at revenue neutrality, why are you doing it? It makes no sense. Reasonable people who add this up, who tally it up, say, "But I don't understand." Now, Mr Eves says education should not be part of this, but he also in the same breath says, "But welfare should." So they say, "But what's the logic of that? What is the logic of adding welfare on to the back of a municipal property taxpayer? Shouldn't that come out of the income tax system? I say yes. What does Mr Eves say about that? He says no.

What about housing? No jurisdiction in the world has ever passed on housing to the municipal level, except this Reform-Conservative government. This is the only jurisdiction in the world that I am aware of that has had the guts to pass on housing to the municipal taxpayer. No one else is doing it. No municipality in the world is running and controlling —

What are you doing, Ms Elliot? What is it? Are you disagreeing with me?

No other jurisdiction in the world is doing this. To let the municipality control and manage co-op housing, non-profit housing, public housing is wrong.

**Mr Preston:** Why would you say that?

**Mr Marchese:** It's wrong.

**Mr Preston:** Why?

**Mr Marchese:** Why? I think so and a whole lot of people think so too. A whole lot of people believe that housing is properly the jurisdiction and the obligation of the provincial government, and the sad thing is that the federal government is about to oblige you. The federal government is no better than you. In fact, they're worse. Through their transfer payments that you guys pooh-poohed when you were here, because you used to say, "Ah, you've got the limousine, NDP government," and now you're saying, Mr Eves, "Ah, it's because of them." Anyway, that's another story.

**Hon Mr Eves:** I've never said that.

**Mr Marchese:** Oh, you used to say, you and the others, "Don't blame the federal government, you're in charge." You used to say, "You've got the limousine."

**Hon Mr Eves:** I never said, "Don't blame the federal government." Never.

**Mr Marchese:** You never said that? Please, it's on the record. Anyway, it's an aside.

The federal government is dumping its housing obligations on to the provincial governments. They don't want it so they stopped building a long time ago. But what people don't know — you should pay attention because some of this stuff will be useful to you —

*Interjection.*

**Mr Marchese:** No, but you should too. The federal government funds public housing equally with the provincial government.

*Interjection.*

**Mr Marchese:** Well, they do now. They do to this day. They used to not only build, they used to be the prime builder of public housing. Now no longer. They stopped building. But they still fund public housing by half.

**Hon Mr Eves:** They're supposed to fund health care, post-secondary education and social assistance.

**Mr Marchese:** That's true. I agree. I don't disagree with you at all. They are downloading on to you, us, and you're downloading on to the municipalities. I make this point to be clear about what they're doing.

On the issue of housing, this government, the federal Liberal government, is dumping their obligation of housing on to the provincial government. The province says, "We don't want it," but they'll take it in order to be able to pass it all down to the municipalities. It's a shameful act.

I predict that the Liberal government will not pass this on to you before the election, because they can't. It would be unwise of them to give it away now because they have to appear to be strong dealing with this very reactionary government, so they want to be the white knights helping the working poor and the poor people of this country. They're going to hold on to that housing stock for now, but when that election is over, if they get another majority, they're going to say, "Here it is, Mr Eves, it's all yours."

**Mr Guzzo:** That would be dishonest.

**Mr Marchese:** It would be dishonest. I agree with you. They should do it now. They should do it now if they've got the nerve to do it now. You hear a lot of MPs in the ridings saying, "Oh no, we want guarantees, signed on paper, before we give it away." But why are they doing it now before the election? Because that guarantee on paper is probably not worth the paper it's written on. That's why. Besides that, they can't get that guarantee.

The federal government will dump its responsibilities on to this government as soon as they, they hope, get re-elected. I hope that won't happen. I hope the social democratic party will do very well in the next election because people will realize that there is no opposition at the federal level. Certainly the Reform Party is hardly an opposition party, and the Bloc, God bless them, have their own concerns. They need an opposition party that's going to care about people finally. You need a party that's going to worry about them.

Why do I raise these issues? Housing is being dumped from the federal level to the provincial level and the



provincial level says, "We don't want to be in the housing business," so all of a sudden they're dumping it on to the municipalities. "Here you go, boys, take it over." And is the money flowing with that? No, it isn't.

**Mr Preston:** Yes, it is.

**Mr Marchese:** It is not.

**Mr Preston:** Oh, yes it is.

**Mr Marchese:** It is not. It takes \$200 million worth of capital repairs — over \$200 million. That money isn't flowing.

**Hon Mr Eves:** Yes, it is.

**Mr Marchese:** And every time we say something, Mr Eves, the finance minister, says: "Yes, it is. The money's there. Yes, it is."

**Mr Preston:** I believe him first.

**Mr Marchese:** I know you do. I know you believe him. You've got to believe him. You're forced to. You're forced to believe him. So he says, "Oh yes, that \$1 billion dollars is there." I don't see it. Peter, do you see that \$1 billion somewhere?

**Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold):** You never will.

**Mr Marchese:** Of course you won't. Is it etched in stone somewhere? No, it's only etched in the memory of Tory minds. That's the only place it's etched in.

**Mr Kormos:** It's part of the propaganda machine.  
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**Mr Marchese:** It's part of the propaganda. "Don't worry if you see that figure, that figure of some \$2 billion." It used to be \$1 billion, \$1.6 billion; now it's \$2 billion, \$2.6 billion.

**Mr Kormos:** Pick a number.

**Mr Marchese:** Yes, every day you've got a different number. The economy is doing better. They said, "Don't worry, municipalities, we've got another \$500 million for you." I say to myself, thinking, "Now why would this government" —

**Mr Kormos:** Giving back some of what they stole.

**Mr Marchese:** Yes, first they steal from the municipalities and then they say, "We're going to give you some back." But secondly, why give these programs — welfare, child care, long-term care, housing, ambulances, public health?

**Mr Kormos:** This government doesn't like sick people.

**Mr Marchese:** They say? "We like sick people but we're going to hand them off to the municipalities. We like them but we're just going to let somebody else take care of them." My argument is, why do that in the first place? Why dump these essential services that properly belong in the field of a provincial government to municipalities to do what they want? It's a race to the bottom that we're faced with here because each municipality is going to have to find its own way to deal with this particular problem. Every municipality, in order to deal all of a sudden with the financial problem it faces, has got to cut somewhere. My feeling is that two things will happen: Property taxes will go up and service delivery and services will go down.

**Mr Preston:** Wrong on both counts.

**Mr Marchese:** I know, we're wrong on this side. You are so perfect. You're infallible. You're more infallible

than the Pope. I've got to find out where you're from; I keep on forgetting. Mr Preston from Brant-Haldimand, you're infallible. I appreciate that. As I say, you're more infallible than the Pope. I can tell by your reassuring tones, by the factual information you spit out from the other side. I know you guys are right and perfect about what you're doing, but some of us are worried and it isn't just we here who are worried but a lot of other people out there. They argue that you are dearranging and rearranging the world in a way that they cannot any longer understand or recognize.

They're about to be hit with property tax increases from a number of different levels and they will not know whether restructuring made it happen, whether disentanglement — that nice word — made it happen, or whether reassessment made it happen. They won't have a clue. I know that all three will happen. I know that restructuring is going to whack people, that disentanglement is going to whack people and that reassessment is going to whack people. However you cut it, however you separate it, a lot of people are going to be undone and hurt in the process.

This disentanglement doesn't clear anything; it confuses it even more. Your saying it's now a 50-50 kind of thing doesn't make it clearer to people. People are not all of a sudden going say, "Oh thank you provincial Conservative government for making it clear that we now pay 50% and you pay 50%." It doesn't make it clearer. The clear thing to do is to simply keep those services that belong to the provincial government and let the municipalities do what they do best. That's what they should do.

**Mr Kormos:** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: This afternoon at old city hall provincial court, the Queen's Park planters charged with mischief were all found not guilty as a result of their courageous efforts in dramatizing the attack of this government on the poor, the homeless and the hungry in this province.

**The Acting Speaker:** That is not a point of order.

**Mr Preston:** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: If anybody in Ontario can go on any public property and plant gardens, I'd like to find out the names of the people who appear in court and plant it along the front of their place.

**The Acting Speaker:** That is not a point of order.

*Interjections.*

**Mr Marchese:** I was making the point that we're going to be hit from various points. The disentanglement is a serious problem and it's going to cause greater property tax increases.

**Ms Martel:** Downloading, not disentanglement.

**Mr Marchese:** Disentanglement is a nice word; you're quite right. It's downloading, dumping a tax bomb on to the municipalities. That's the one they refer to as a disentanglement. The restructuring is going to be a problem and the reassessment is going to be a problem. Here's what Enid Slack from the consulting firm, said, very much stating what I'm saying: "When you get your property tax bill in 1998, I'm sure it's going to be different than it is today, but you're not going to know if reassessment got you, if the disentanglement got you or if restructuring got you. It's going to be very hard to know."



**Mr Preston:** When did she say that?

**Mr Marchese:** This is an economist, Enid Slack. When did she say this? February 4, 1997.

We have a number of problems that this government doesn't want to deal with. First of all, they refuse to release information. This government claims to respect people's rights to know, but in this particular case they are withholding that knowledge from the people because they know that it would not be in their interest for the public to know that it's not in their public interest to have that information.

We at least had the courage in 1993 to release this information. We had the courage to do that and, of course, we got hammered by various sectors in Metropolitan Toronto, but that's what you get for trying to do the right thing. Mr Eves says: "Oh no, there's no point releasing the information because if we release it, people won't know what to do with it. There are so many factors that come into play. There's no point doing it."

We urge Mr Eves to give us that information because we feel that, with it, people will have a better sense of what the impact will be on them. Metro Toronto is going to face one of the most serious tax increases we've ever seen.

**Mr Preston:** Not a fact.

**Mr Kormos:** Niagara region as well. Welland, Thorold, St Catharines, Niagara Falls.

**Mr Marchese:** And many other jurisdictions. I didn't bring the whole list, but many jurisdictions.

**Mr Kormos:** Seventy-one million dollars in new taxes.

**Mr Marchese:** In Welland-Thorold \$71 million?

**Mr Kormos:** In the Niagara region \$71 million in new taxes.

**Ms Martel:** A hundred and five million dollars in the Sudbury region.

**Mr Marchese:** And \$105 million in the Sudbury region.

Mr Preston says, "That's not a fact." These are numbers that these communities generate out of the expertise of the work they do. They do this on a daily basis, but Mr Preston says it's not a fact. I don't know how we tackle that. I don't know how you deal with that.

**Mr Preston:** A moment ago you said they were incompetent.

**Mr Marchese:** Who said they were incompetent?

**Mr Preston:** You did.

**Ms Martel:** We're talking about you guys.

**Mr Marchese:** Mr Preston, a minute ago I was referring to your ministry people who were saying the ministry is aware that the division cannot deliver the assessment in the time frame set by the government and still carry out the day-to-day assessment operations. That's what I was saying before. Is that what you're referring to?

**Mr Kormos:** How would he know?

**Mr Marchese:** Distracting me constantly. Shirley Hoy, the CEO of Metro services in Metropolitan Toronto, released a report, and they said that downloading itself is going to be \$530 million. Applied across the board, this is going to be a 15.5% increase for everyone, on property taxpayers. I tell you, when people are going to face that kind of increase — and add to that actual value assess-

ment — my God, the tax fire is going to look awfully, awfully bad.

*Interjection.*

**Mr Marchese:** He's saying, "Oh, don't worry about seniors," because he has permitted, through enabling legislation, municipalities to take care of them.

**Mr Kormos:** They won't have the money to take care of them.

**Mr Marchese:** To defer them possibly, as if deferral meant somehow they were exonerated, but they're not. Deferral only means they're going to pay later, not now. It's still the same problem. It means those people are going to still have to swallow that big horse pill and, I tell you, it's a big, big horse pill. It's going to be hard to swallow and the older you get the more difficult those pills become to swallow.

This 15.5% tax increase, plus the increase on actual value assessment, that's going to be a big pill, Mr Manning, Mr Preston Manning —

1700

*Interjections.*

**Mr Marchese:** Mr Preston. It's going to be a big pill.

Here are the non-reassessed municipalities and district school area boards. I want to read them because I think it's important because they don't know. I suspect some of these municipalities don't know that they're about to be hit, whacked —

**Mr Kormos:** Niagara region.

**Mr Marchese:** Let me just see. You have Adjala, Toronto township. You have the Adolphustown township — it's a difficult one to pronounce. I apologize to the people living there if I mispronounced it. Asquith, Garvey DSA board, Barrie township, Beardmore township, Bedford township, Belmont and Methuen township —

**Mr Kormos:** Are they going to get hit?

**Mr Marchese:** They're all going to be hit. Bradford, West Gwillimbury town, Brethour township, Brighton town, Brighton township, Caledon town, Camden East township, Caramat DSA board, Chapleau board, Chapleau township, Clarendon and Miller township, Cobalt town, Coleman township, Collins DSA board, Cramahe township, Denbigh, Abinger and Ashby township, Dilke township, Dymond township, East York borough, Essa township, Etobicoke city — we know about Etobicoke; we have a few members here — Foleet DSA board —

*Interjection:* Not for long.

**Mr Kormos:** Will those Etobicoke Tories get re-elected?

**Mr Marchese:** I'm not sure. After this, who knows whether some of these people will be elected, especially those who believe that they're infallible and there are not going to be any tax increases.

**Mr Kormos:** They better watch out for their seats.

**Mr Marchese:** Geraldton board, Gillies township, Gogama DSA board, Haldimand township, James Bay Lowlands board, James township, Kapuskasing town — there's a lot of towns — Kashabowie DSA board —

**Mr Kormos:** Little people.

**Mr Marchese:** Little people are most of these townships. They're not big people, wealthy people. They're little people and they're going to be hit. Kennebec



township, Kilkenny DSA board, Markham town, Midland town, Mine Centre DSA board, Missarenda DSA board, Morley township, Morrisburg village, Murray township, Nakina township, New Tecumseth town, Nipigon-Red Rock board, North York city, Oshawa city — and we've got a few members from Oshawa who think this is fair.

**Mr Kormos:** Not for long.

**Mr Marchese:** Palmerston and Ennis, Canoto, Penetanguishene town, Percy township, Prince township, Ramore township, Richmond Hill town — we've got a few members here — Scarborough city, Severn township, Slate Falls DSA board, Sturgeon Lake board, Summer Beaver DSA board, Toronto city, Trenton city, Umfreville DSA board, Upsala DSA board, Vaughan city, Verulam township, Wasaga Beach town — I've been there several times — Whitby town and York city.

I tell you, they're not, from what I can tell, wealthy communities. They're just ordinary people, working people —

**Mr Kormos:** Hardworking people.

**Mr Marchese:** — hardworking people, seniors in many of these municipalities, many injured workers, people of modest incomes.

**Mr Kormos:** Are these people who make as much money as Al Leach?

**Mr Marchese:** They don't make as much money as the Minister of Municipal Affairs and some other ministers. They don't make as much money as some of the bankers that some of you want to support through your tax cut. A lot of these people are modest people. Modest people, not bankers. You've got to look at the impact that this is going to have on them. You just can't come out with a document that says, "We're about to bring about fairness to your communities," because they fail to say that in this scheme, somebody benefits but somebody will hurt from it, and that's what this is all about.

You have another measure here —

*Interjections.*

**The Acting Speaker:** Order.

**Mr Marchese:** Thank you, Mr Speaker. All of this insanity is because of the income tax cut. They don't like to hear it. I know they become very upset when you raise it, because they say: "No, this is good for the public. An income tax cut, however and whoever gets it, is going to be spent. It's great for the economy." In fact, Mr Eves claims this has created all these hundreds of jobs. If that is the case, I ask the minister, bring forth the studies. Bring them out, because I don't believe for one moment that we've had more than a few jobs because of their income tax cut.

That income tax cut is going to the wealthiest and most privileged people in this province. That's where it's going. Sixty per cent of all of that income tax goes to 10% of the wealthiest and most privileged of our citizens. So Mr Eves and all the others are saying: "Don't worry. Whatever we give to these rich people they're going to spend somehow."

**Mr Kormos:** Does Al Leach spend all of his money while he's triple-dipping?

**Mr Marchese:** Do all these ministers spend their money? Do all the bankers who benefit from this spend their money on essential goods: on fridges and toasters

and stoves and essential appliances that we need day to day? Are those bankers earning \$1.7 million going to spend their money in those areas where the economy in fact is helped? They're not going to do that. They're investing their money. That's what bankers do: They invest. You know where it goes? Most of that money goes out of the country, not internal to our own communities and what would benefit our communities. It goes out of the country so that they can make more money for themselves. That's what this is about.

You see, when this government is forced to do these things in order to be able to deliver a tax cut, it offends so many of us. It offends me that this government is offloading, downloading so much on to the municipal taxpayers: community police financing, integration of farm tax rebate and other rebates to local taxes. Speaking of that, and I'll return to this long list, these measures, he says — the integration of farm tax rebate and other rebates to local taxes — amount to a \$171-million tax cut for farmers and a further \$8 million tax cut for woodlot owners.

The farmers obviously don't lose in this regard. They benefit, as they did before, but it solves a whole lot of paperwork; this is true. But a whole lot of municipalities — I was at the ROMA conference just this week, this Monday.

**Ms Martel:** I was there.

**Mr Marchese:** And Shelley Martel was there and our leader Howard Hampton was there. Bud Wildman was there. A number of our members were there, listening in. We know that a lot of members from ROMA are very concerned about this particular measure itself, because they know that as municipalities, they will have lost \$171 million or \$175 million, which they need and needed and will need to be able to deal with their own community problems.

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To a question asked of the parliamentary assistant on this very issue: "Where is that money? Is it there? How do we access? What are you going to do with it?" I'm not sure what the parliamentary assistant gave by way of an answer, but I can tell you it wasn't clear. It wasn't clear to the questioner, who wanted certainty from that parliamentary assistant, who of course couldn't give any certainty because parliamentary assistants are never given any power to make decisions, or to even know really what the minister and/or the government in cabinet would decide to do with that money.

That \$171 million, for all intents and purposes, is gone. It's not there. You don't really have it. It's this fictional number that you create, like this fund that you have, this \$1-billion fund, this now \$2.5-billion fund, this extra \$5 million that has been added to the hopper. All this money is not there. So people come and ask you — at least, in that case at the conference, because the minister didn't show up, by the way. Shelley, I don't know if you noticed.

A number of people spoke to this and said, "We are offended that Minister Leach is not here at this conference," and there was a great deal of clapping at the fact that they took offence that the minister didn't have the courage to show up and make himself accountable. A lot



of those people coming from the rural areas had a lot of questions. They did. They had a lot of questions, and they had to turn people off because there was a cutoff at 12 o'clock and a lot of people who were up at the mikes couldn't speak because there wasn't enough time.

The minister should have been there to answer some of those questions, but he didn't have the courage to make himself accountable, and that minister in particular should have been there to make himself accountable because the parliamentary assistant couldn't answer the question as to where the \$171 million is?

**Mr Kormos:** He doesn't know.

**Mr Marchese:** He didn't know, I know that, because he answered in a way that he didn't know.

People from rural communities wanted reassurance from this government that the money that it's taken away is there. We're not sure. I asked a question of the minister with respect to this fund, "Can you give us assurances that this fund, that \$1 billion will be there year in and year out?" he didn't answer with assurances. He didn't answer because the money isn't really there.

When people come on bended knee for support for a particular program or some particular suffering they're facing in their communities, the government will have to find money but it essentially isn't there. It's not as if, "Here's \$1 billion set aside." It's a fictional number, it's an elastic number that grows. Like an elastic, it just grows. If people say, "Increase it," they say, "Okay, we'll increase it." Like an elastic, you stretch it out a little more and you add a little more money to it if that's what people need to hear, but it's not there.

We are very concerned about the impact.

**Ms Martel:** What if you have to spend your reserves too?

**Mr Marchese:** Their own reserves. No doubt. Of course, municipalities will, by force, have to use the reserves they might have wherever they have reserves. As you are engaged in discussion with them and saying, "We've got a couple of million here, but Premier, we need that money in reserve, so don't force us to spend that money," do you think Mike is going to say, "Oh, you're right. Keep it, because you might need it for a rainy day"? No, he's going to say: "Spend it. Spend your reserve or cut services."

That's what it's all about: Cut services or increase your property taxes. Mike Harris, the Taxfighter, knows that to increase property taxes would be a mortal sin for a lot of municipal people. They can't increase property taxes; that would be a problem. So they're faced with having to harmonize downward, cutting services.

Not only that; you're going to see a mismatch, a hopscotch type of helter-skelter servicing in every area of service that you are about to dump on them on this. You have dumped on them the business occupancy tax; that's a dump. You look fantastic in doing it, you get credit — "Finally some government has the fortitude to deal with it" — but municipalities are left to deal with that. You take \$171 million away from your integration of farm tax rebate and other rebates to local taxes, but those rural municipalities are faced with having to deal with a shortfall because they've got a problem now.

What does the government say to that? "It's your problem. If you've got a problem, come and talk to us

and we'll see." Is that the way municipal governments should come down? When you, the municipality, go to the Mike Harris government, he's going to tell you: "You deal with your own problems. Privatize your services if you've got to save money."

**Mr Kormos:** Sell off your nursing homes, your seniors' homes.

**Mr Marchese:** That's really what it's about. Not only that: "Sell off public housing." That's what this is all about. The fear we have is that a lot of these communities are likely to sell the land of public housing, because in some of those areas that land is very lucrative and if you sell it you stand to make a lot of money. You think municipalities faced with a particular problem of finance are not going to sell off some of that land?

**Mr Kormos:** They don't want to, but they have to.

**Mr Marchese:** Many don't want to, it is true, but they're going to be put into a very difficult position of selling public land, of privatizing a lot of services that are now public, reducing the service as a result of privatizing, because that's really what privatization is all about. At the end of the day, what you've got is property taxes that are high, or higher if they've got the courage to increase them because they've got to, and service is diminished.

This government is introducing a bill that it says is somehow going to bring about greater fairness. I have highlighted two areas — the business occupancy tax and the integration of farm tax rebate and other rebates to local taxes — that are going to create a problem for municipalities. That in itself is a problem. This government refuses to admit that's a problem, but I tell you it is a big problem.

Actual value assessment, or market value, which is what this is all about, is going to create higher property tax increases. Your municipalities, the ones you call partners, are not really your partners; they are your hostages. They're not really volunteers in this. Most of these municipalities haven't volunteered their services to this government. Most of these municipalities are telling you, "Please don't dump this on to us."

AMO in particular, representing municipal government, is saying, "This is a serious problem you are dumping on us, and we don't want it." They're not your partners. They're not volunteering. They are being forced to accept a horse pill that is very hard to swallow. They are your hostages, and a lot of these communities are fighting back. They're fighting back because they know they're facing and are going to face a serious problem.

For many, getting a property tax increase is serious enough, but what's worse is that services are going to be seriously affected in every area imaginable: in the area of housing, in the area of child care, in the area of social assistance, in the area of public health, in the area of libraries. In every area that you're dumping on to these municipalities, those services are going to be affected. Think of that.

Long-term care: We are about to have a community of seniors that is beyond our imagination. We're going to have a lot of seniors in about 10 years' time. We will need long-term-care services, special services to be delivered for those folks within a 10-year period. This government knows the demographics. They know we're about to enter into an age where we're going to have a



lot of seniors in our communities, and they are dumping this particular service and so many others on to their so-called partners. Well, these partners are saying: "We don't want it. We can't afford to assume a responsibility for something which will grow, not only in numbers but in costs." And you, this government that is seriously eliminating and obliterating hospitals, are not putting the money back into our communities to be able to help people. You are obliterating hospitals all over this fine province and you're not putting the money back.

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Municipalities are worried. They're frightened. At the ROMA conference, the rural municipalities conference I was at, they were very afraid of this. Some of them are about to lose hospitals with one quick brush of your pen. They're gone. They're worried because they know that in some of these communities where distances are so vast it's going to be a hell of a thing to be able to get the health care services they need. And you dump this on these municipalities that have become your hostages. Come on.

Long-term care is going to increase in its costs. Education is going to go down because you're going to pull away \$2 billion. You're going to pull \$2 billion out of education and that's why costs are going to go down. And quality is not going to be improved by your taking it away. You all constantly argue that the NDP and others say, "We'll only increase quality by increasing the money they get." The opposite, this argument says, is true: "We're going to decrease it to make quality better."

No, my friends, you're not going to be increasing quality by decreasing funding. In fact the quality of education is going to be fundamentally deranged by you and by the \$2-billion cuts you're going to inflict on those children and those school teachers. Not only will boards be forced to fire paraprofessionals, social workers, inner city programs they have in some of those areas, educational assistants, but principals might even be affected by this, I tell you, and consultants who do a good job, because a lot of consultants offer a lot of curriculum assistance to teachers. A lot of these people will be gone. You know something else? We've done a study in the Toronto board that says class sizes are going to increase.

You are passing on incredible costs to municipalities, and long-term care is a very expensive one. Housing will be very expensive to municipalities, to maintain those buildings, because they're 30 years old. This government isn't passing the money on. That \$1 billion that has become very elastic — fictional in your own minds — is not going to be there to support these people.

Social assistance will become an always increasing problem. Everybody's telling you that, including your former friend Mr Crombie. Your former friend Mr Crombie is telling you: "Don't do this. It's an insanity." He knows that in the next recession, which is not far away — we've seen recessions every five years now. They used to be every seven years and now they're coming much closer to each other. Every five years now we're getting a recession. So welfare costs are going up, jacking right up. They will, inevitably, because recessions will come.

You've got housing, you've got long-term care, you've got child care that has become mandatory now. You take

the little money that you gave to provide some provincial support and influence in municipalities and you give it all away. You give it all away to the municipalities.

Libraries that are essential to communities, and in some communities more than others, you're taking them away from people who need that service. I tell you, municipalities are going to have to cut back. They have to. They've got to cut back, and they're cutting back now. It's not as if we're inventing this. They're cutting back now. Libraries are needed for children.

There's no money. You're giving a tax cut. That's where your money's going. That's why we don't have it.

**Hon Mr Sterling:** You spent all the money.

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** The Minister of Environment is not being helpful. I would ask that he discontinue that line of heckling.

**Interjection:** Try another kind.

**The Speaker:** That's very fair: any line of heckling.

**Mr Marchese:** We've taken the money? No, you're sucking the money away. It's like this big sucking machine called the income tax cut. It's going into the big mouths of your privileged friends, particularly your banker friends — types, not just bankers — sucking it away into those deep pockets. The Conrad Blacks of this world, that's where it's going. That income tax cut is one of the most insane of policies, of ideas, that you have ever put forth. Insane. These ministers have the courage and the guts to say we spent it all. They give it away to their very privileged friends without flinching one moment. They have a lot of money for their wealthy friends, but they have nothing left for their municipalities.

**Hon Mr Sterling:** You increased the taxes to those making \$20,000 a year, you guys.

**Mr Marchese:** We increased the taxes, eh? You are about to increase across the board. Property taxes across the board are going to go right up. They're going to get whacked by this Conservative government. Small business is going to be whacked by this government through property tax increases.

These taxfighters have the gall to say, "We did it. We're doing this one," you and your big bus, Mike Harris coming back to Toronto with a big bus. But this big bus is no longer the Taxfighter; it's Mike With a Big Bus the Taxfighter, and he's driving it with the infallible lackeys right behind cheering him on: "Go ahead, Mikey, you're doing a fine job."

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker:** I appreciate the member for Fort York is doing his best to have a sensible, rational debate and he's being interrupted on a fairly regular basis by the members opposite, particularly the member for Brant-Haldimand. I would ask that you come to order.

**Mr Preston:** I'm sorry.

**The Speaker:** Thank you. And I would ask the member for Fort York — I understand this situation and the points you'd like to make. If you could help me by being somewhat less vociferous, maybe that would be helpful.

**Mr Marchese:** I want to thank my good friend the Speaker for his support. "Vociferous" is a good word. "Vociferous" means that one is loud, and sometimes you have to be forceful to be heard, because the heckling on the other side sometimes is a bit disconcerting, so you've got to be a little more vociferous to be heard.



I was at the point of talking about the tax hiker now, that new bus making a U-turn around that corner again. You remember that bus, right, boys, the big one you used to drive with? Some of you were in it; some of you were in that bus, driving it along, saying, "We're going to decrease your taxes." Oh, yes, you're going to decrease taxes. While you give the billions away to your friends, you're decreasing it for your other friends. The poor people are going to get a tax hike while your privileged friends are going to get a tax break. This is a big tax break. They're going to get a big one, all right.

We're talking about ordinary people all of a sudden having to deal with the likes of all of you, the people who make \$22,000. People who rent in a rental building, a third of them, 33%, make \$23,000.

**Hon Mr Sterling:** What about your mileage?

**Mr Marchese:** Oh, he's angry; he's hurt. Minister, I urge you to have your time when you're up, because I want to hear those eloquent remarks that you have to make. I'm impressed by them. Please, I know if I say these things that hurt you, you've got to dig for something to defend yourself, but you're grasping. You really are.

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**Mr Joseph Spina (Brampton North):** You're grasping.

**Mr Marchese:** I'm grasping? No, no, my friends. No, you're grasping into the pockets of the little people, taking it away and transferring it to your rich friends. You've got your clutches into the pockets of the little people and giving it to your friends: Conrad Black. That's Mike's good buddy. Mike and Conrad are good buddies; they like each other a lot. Conrad doesn't like social democrats and he hates socialists.

**Mr Kormos:** He hates workers.

**Mr Marchese:** He doesn't like workers, though he says he does.

**Mr Kormos:** Well, when?

**Mr Marchese:** He says he's improving the quality of the information they get. Not only that: He says that by amalgamating and consuming all these papers, he's providing jobs for people. That's what he says.

**Mr Kormos:** But he's laying them off.

**Mr Marchese:** Exactly. He fires them by the thousands and then he says, "But we're saving them at the same time." Mike and Conrad are one and the same, taking from the low- and modest-income earners, grasping and clasping at their pockets to transfer it away to their privileged friends. It is an insult, an insult to all of us.

**Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South):** How is AVA different from MVA?

**Mr Marchese:** I've got a long list. Here is a comparison. Do some of my colleagues want to hear a comparison of AVA and MVA?

**Mr Christopherson:** We would be very interested to hear that. Get the truth out there.

**Mr Bisson:** There isn't any difference, is there?

**Mr Marchese:** There are some differences, Mr Speaker, for your benefit, because this is detailed and it's important for people to know the difference between actual value and market value assessment.

**Interjection:** Ask Al Leach.

**Mr Marchese:** Al doesn't have this. The minister needs this.

**Mr Spina:** *Remarks in Italian.*

**Mr Marchese:** He's speaking Italian again, Mr Speaker.

**Mr Bisson:** Is he saying nice things?

**Mr Marchese:** *Remarks in Italian.*

**The Speaker:** Listen, I understand, but Italian isn't one of the official languages. I would just ask that you stick with French or English. As far as heckling is concerned, it's always out of order, member for Brampton North, in any language.

**M. Marchese:** Je voudrais le dire en français mais c'est trop difficile. Mes chers collègues, Monsieur le Président, here's that comparison:

Roll return activity; here's the activity on one part: annual under actual value, and under market value it's annual. No difference in this regard.

Reassessment: It's annual under actual value assessment and, under market value assessment, reassessments are done by request, but regional and county-wide assessments have mandatory four-year updates. Municipalities can elect to be reassessed at full market value or by property class.

Moving on to base-year valuation: The base-year valuation is updated annually and the effective date is July 1 of the year prior to the taxation year. Under market value assessment the base year changes every four years. There's a two-year lag in applying the base year to allow time for data collection.

Values on roll: Separate land and structure values are recorded on the roll under actual value, and under market value only one value is recorded on the roll, but they are the same.

**Mr Bisson:** Does Al Leach know this?

**Mr Marchese:** M. Leach has to hear this. He needs a copy. If the staff behind the Speaker don't have this, I've got a copy for you. I think you've got to pass it on. You've got it? You've got it. Good. But you should pass it on to the minister, because I'm not sure he's clear about the differences. I tell you, this is technical stuff, very technical. We've heard the minister answering technical questions, and you know, Speaker, how complicated that is.

Mr Speaker, there are only a few minutes left, so what I want to do is to summarize. This is a two-pager. I know you have concerns around small business people, and this will affect them so you should look at these.

**Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale):** How come he's whacking them?

**Mr Marchese:** He's whacking them. They're all whacking them. They're all whacking small business people, all of them. I read to you the list from the city of Toronto that speaks about how small business gets whacked by actual value assessment, or market value, and gets whacked by the downloading of the municipalities this government holds as hostages, not partners. "Partners" means that people are voluntarily engaged in the process together. That's what it means, that we sit down together and agree on how to manage a particular problem. In this case, Mike Harris went with a gun and said: "Boys, you're my partners. You're about receive a



number of services that you may not like, but here is the gun. If you don't like it, the gun is here."

You've got a number of choices. You can cut your services or increase property taxes, or you can do both. You can increase property taxes; if you want to maintain the present level of services, you've got to increase property taxes. But they can't increase property taxes because if they do, it would be suicidal. This government knows that. The reason they are dumping these services on to municipalities is because they know these hostages are the ones who are going to have to do the cuts and take the blame. The provincial government can sit pretty and say: "We didn't do it. You mean transportation has been affected in Metropolitan Toronto? We didn't do it." The minister says: "No, Metro did that. I didn't do anything."

They cut back, and if they leave that poor municipality to its own devices, it doesn't have the money so it ends up cutting, and then the ministers sit pretty and say: "We haven't done a thing. All we've done is to provide enabling legislation that permits municipalities to do some things. Yes, those things may be bad, but they're doing it, not us."

Bill 106 is not a fair bill. It is a bill that's going to whack small business, seniors and people with low incomes, injured workers who own homes, and it's going to whack them in a serious way. When they find out, this government is not going to look very good, and they'll come after you.

**The Speaker:** Questions and comments?

**Ms Bassett:** I must point out that the member for Fort York got carried away for 90 minutes criticizing aspects of our bill rather than recognizing that this is an outdated, archaic property tax system that we vowed to change, which every other government vowed to change and just didn't have the courage to move forward on.

I want to clarify three points, first about the issue of reassessment being not on time. I want you to know, for the record, that the project of updating assessment values is on target and on schedule. Sales investigations will be 90% complete by March 31 of this year, onsite property reinspections will be almost half completed by March 31 and income data collection will be 80% complete by March 31. So we are moving forward.

Now on the issue of the elimination of the business occupancy tax, a tax that came in in 1904: For somebody so young as the member for Fort York, I find it amazing that he's so regressive, wanting to hold on to something so old. The business occupancy tax loses on average \$200 million a year we are in arrears collecting; it's impossible to collect.

We are changing the system to make it fairer and we are allowing the municipalities to recover the revenue they should be getting from that in fair ways, where they want to assess other properties. That's certainly within what everybody has been calling for for months, in fact years.

**Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines):** I wonder if the member is aware of how this will be covered in the news media, so I ask him this particular question. It says today:

"Baton Broadcasting Inc has announced that effective immediately it is restructuring its television operations in Ontario. The restructuring will result in the elimination of 154 full- and part-time positions and will yield ongoing savings from all Ontario operations of \$8.3 million a year. At Baton's wholly owned operations in Toronto, Ottawa and northern Ontario the efficiencies will result in the elimination of 87 full- and part-time positions, affecting 80 employees. In London and Kitchener, where Baton manages television operations owned jointly with Electrohome Ltd, restructuring will result in the elimination of 67 full-time and part-time staff positions, affecting 62 people."

I'm just wondering whether the member, in view of the fact that we've seen countless layoffs in the newspaper industry as a result of one person by the name of Conrad Black taking over newspaper operations, and we see people disappearing from the gallery daily — and this is for all of us to consider, not anybody else; this just happened to be today's — if we look at all the cuts that have been made over the years from the Conrad Black operations, from television operations — I remember channel 11 a while ago had 26 layoffs or something like this; CBC is being cut back — whether the member has a concern that issues such as the one he is discussing today can be adequately covered when people are losing their jobs left and right and we have fewer people to cover this place and other places where significant decisions are being made. I would be very interested in the member's comments on that.

**Mr Kormos:** Considering the rate at which Conrad Black has been gobbling up small-town newspapers and spitting out their staff, it's no wonder they call him "Tubby." I understand now why corpulence has become a problem. He's clearly overfed and underexercised.

The member for Fort York has addressed this in an arresting way, a compelling way. Quite frankly the message is one that, I tell you, some of these people across the floor had better start listening to because they clearly aren't getting the straight goods from their own leadership and their own cabinet and from the back rooms over there at Whitney or the back rooms over on Bay Street where the decision-making is taking place.

Let me tell you about Niagara region. First they were hopeful. They hoped that the downloading would maybe involve only some \$30 million, \$31 million in new taxes. After a more thorough analysis we're up to over \$70 million in new taxes for the folks in the Niagara region — for seniors, for the growing numbers of unemployed, for young families, for students.

They're shutting down hospitals built by the hardworking people of Niagara region, hospitals that are essential to adequate, competent health care. Let me tell you about the report that was made to Niagara regional council suggesting that if this government persists, they may have to sell off at least three of their seniors homes, of their nursing homes, the place where we put our folks and grandfolks in, hoping they can receive some modestly decent care in their senior years; further, that we're going to have to forfeit hundreds of child care spaces, attacking and condemning those women who are eager to get out into the workplace and compete as much as they have to, to work at jobs that simply aren't there.



**Mr Steve Gilchrist (Scarborough East):** It's been an interesting few minutes to sit here. We went 90 minutes with the actual presentation from the member for Fort York and the two rebuttals from the Liberals and NDP without even talking about the bill in question. For those watching at home with the trailer going across your screen, it was talking about the reform of the property tax bill. It's sad that neither of the parties opposite wants to deal with this bill, which will deal with decades-old inequities.

They didn't have the courage to change it. They went right to the brink. The NDP went right to the brink and didn't have the courage to bring in market value assessment. Why? Because their downtown friends in Toronto talked them out of it, and people across this province who would have benefited from having a fair taxation system were denied that right. Our government has now put this in place. The land won't be assessed at the highest and best value; it'll be assessed at its current value. There will be all sorts of opportunities not only to address the unfairness in the assessment but to make sure, for those going up, that there are —

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker:** Members of the third party, it's difficult enough to hear the members when there's no heckling, and I request the members to come to order.

**Mr Gilchrist:** The member for Fort York was commenting about heckling during his presentation. We've got Bonnie and Clyde opposite who are doing their best. The member for Welland-Thorold was commenting that the member for St Catharines was presenting things in an arresting way, and there's no doubt he can speak informedly to that.

Seriously, the bottom line is this: We will, for the first time in 50 years in this province, have a fair taxation system that will address the inequities and guarantee that everywhere you live in this province, you'll pay the right level of tax, not something based on 54-years-out-of-date statistics, which is the case today.

**The Speaker:** Response, member for Fort York.

**Mr Marchese:** I appreciate the comments from the members for St Andrew-St Patrick, St Catharines, Welland-Thorold and Scarborough East.

On the issue of the business occupancy tax I have said that the government gets to say, "We're eliminating this tax, which is \$1.6 billion, but we're leaving or enabling the municipality with a way to find that amount." That's a problem. You look good by taking it out because it's an outdated 1904 tax, but you leave your hostages to find a way to deal with the \$1.6 billion. So you look great by doing that.

Someone has got to find a system and a way to deal with that. That's a problem. You have the courage to deal with an outdated system, but what you don't have is the courage to say, "Some people are going to be whacked as a result of this." Many people in your riding of Scarborough are going to be whacked too. They're going to be whacked with a tax increase. Maybe you don't know it, but many of them know it as well. Those people who don't get a tax increase are going to be faced with a tax increase when they confront the download, because the download is going to force tax hikes. So that person who thinks he is going to be spared as a result of AVA or

MVA — which is irrelevant; it all means you're going to get a tax increase — that person is going to face a tax increase. That's the problem.

As for the comments from my colleague from St Catharines, the point is that industries like Baton Broadcasting, when they fire people, that is the way they make their money. They make it at the expense of workers. You're quite right that there will be fewer people to be able to cover the news, fewer people to cover what people who are hurt have to say.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker:** The member for Cochrane South, I don't want to hear it. Just come to order.

Further debate?

**Mr Turnbull:** Mr Speaker, I know you will certainly be listening attentively to this debate because we have discussed this very issue of property taxes on many occasions, sometimes quite heatedly.

1750

This bill we have before us today, Bill 106, the Fair Municipal Finance Act, 1997, is a bill to have a standardized assessment all across the province of Ontario, something we haven't had for most of this century. I would like to provide a little bit of historical perspective in terms of where we find ourselves at this moment.

We have at this moment a patchwork quilt of assessment all across Ontario. We have many municipalities that have already implemented market value assessment over the last few years under both the Liberal government and the NDP government. One of the last areas of the province that did not have an updated assessment was Metropolitan Toronto.

At the time the Liberals were in power, Metropolitan Toronto requested that that government implement legislation allowing it to put forward market value based on a 1984 assessment. The Minister of Revenue at the time, Bernard Grandmaître, the member for Ottawa East, agreed, but with the caveat that it had to be a 1988 assessment, not a 1984 assessment.

The Liberals are papered every way to Sunday that they were going to implement 1988 market value assessment. You cannot duck it. I have to say, before I was involved in politics, when I was a ratepayer president, I had a continuous correspondence with Bernard Grandmaître on the issue of market value assessment and the areas I perceived to be wrong about market value assessment. It was very clear that the Liberals intended to go forward with it, but they wanted this 1988 assessment. They were about to implement it in 1990.

**Mr Baird:** What happened?

**Mr Turnbull:** But folks, something came in between. It's called an election. Guess what? They didn't win that election, even though they had said they were going to implement — I believe my colleague across the floor is pointing to some debates from the House. I want to point out that of course the NDP came in and introduced legislation in December 1992 to implement market value assessment in Metropolitan Toronto.

The proposal they came forward with was seriously flawed. Indeed, in the end, after a lot of urging from myself, our party pressed for public hearings and got public hearings. It wasn't something that the Liberals



were very keen on, because they already had said they were going to implement market value assessment in Metropolitan Toronto. But out of the debate that went on in the public hearings, it became apparent that the plan which the NDP was putting forward, the plan which the Liberals had said they were going to move on, was not acceptable for several reasons.

I would return to the discussion of the minister of the day, the Honourable David Cooke, when he rose in the House after the public hearings and said he was going to temporarily withdraw the legislation, Bill 94. I'm just going to read a few excerpts. He said, "We're sending the plan back to Metro for revision and resolution of problems I will highlight today," that indeed I will highlight too. He further went on to say, "As the public hearings into Bill 94 continued, day and night, accommodating 175 individuals and organizations, the ultimate workability of Metro's plan was also called into question."

Further, he said: "We do not intend to withdraw the bill. We simply want a [more] workable Metro plan."

He goes on to say, "From the beginning we saw Metro's interim plan as an attempt by a duly elected body to update a property tax system that had not been reviewed for 50 years."

I would really suggest that perhaps the last debater in this House might want to review this speech by his former colleague. I know they're not very happy with him these days, but be that as it may.

**Mr Baird:** Who said that?

**Mr Turnbull:** That was the Honourable David Cooke when he was the Minister of Municipal Affairs.

He went on to say: "Members of this House will also know that I stated early on that I was concerned that a change in home ownership would automatically move that property to full market value assessment. We also expressed concern that other properties, like railway and hydro rights of way, vacant lands and municipal parking authorities, would move to full market assessment...upon implementation."

He also commented on the cost that was estimated to Ontario Hydro, which would be \$60 million a year by moving to market value. He also said that CN and CP were estimated to have an increase in their taxes of some \$40 million a year, which would have crippled the railway's ability to operate in Metropolitan Toronto.

The minister was saying, "Yes, I agree to market value assessment, but the problems I have are basically how you treat land in terms of being taxed as to the highest and best use," but he didn't do anything about it. He said: "I'll let that go ahead. I'm only concerned really about the utility rights of way and the fact that houses, upon sale, would move to full market value assessment." They didn't do anything other than that.

They said they were going to pass market value assessment, so let me be very adamant about this: In the debate that we've heard today, a debate where the Liberals have taken part and the NDP has taken part, they are talking about the fact that there's something wrong with this legislation.

**Mr Bradley:** I found it.

**Mr Turnbull:** I intend to perhaps mention some of the things I had as problems, which are well recorded in

Hansard and which I'm sure my colleague the member for St Catharines is about to quote. I will address those specifically.

The principal problem we've had with market value assessment is that it was inequitable in its application, for several different reasons. One of them was the fact that it was a market-based assessment. I am a person who has always opposed a value-based assessment. I've lost that argument, and I will say publicly, I think it's unfortunate. The majority of the Liberal Party, the majority of the NDP and the majority of the Conservatives believe that a value-based assessment is the right way of assessing, and I will make the statement once again as to why I think that is wrong.

**Mr Bradley:** Page 3490.

**Mr Turnbull:** With all due respect, Mr Bradley, if you would listen to what I am saying you would know that I am addressing specifically the debate that I have joined in the past.

**Mr Bradley:** This is a petition. You read a petition.

**Mr Turnbull:** Well, good. It was no doubt a petition opposing market value assessment.

The problem we have with a value-based assessment is the fact that it is not a measure of people's ability to pay and it is not a measure of the use of services. But having said that — and I've argued that very vociferously with you, Mr Speaker, among others, on many occasions. I've lost that debate. I still think I would like to see all the members of this House coming together and saying, "No, we shouldn't have a value-based assessment," but it's not in the cards, because around this great province of ours the majority of people feel that it's equitable.

The other area that market value was wrong in and that we are addressing, and that's why I can support this legislation, is the fact that we're going to a standardized year for assessment all across the province, a year which will allow the province to measure the value of properties and the ability to tax in all parts of the province, in all municipalities. We're moving to a stable year of assessment.

Market value was going to be on the 1988 assessment year, the most unstable year we've ever had in values, where we saw the differential between the low end of the market and the high end of the market at an all-time high. However, 1996 had a much more stabilized effect; the differential was smaller. It is still there but significantly smaller. There was a sufficient number of sales in that year to make it a good year to measure and yet sales had not gone up in that year. As a matter of fact, the value of the sales had gone down slightly, so it was stable.

I see my friend from — where is it? — Kingston and The Islands.

**Mr Bradley:** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I am wondering if it would be helpful to the debate if I were to read a petition the member for York Mills read —

**The Speaker:** I am very certain that it will not be helpful. Actually, you know what? I'll just say that it's 6 of the clock and we'll adjourn the House and — I've completely forgotten the words, actually; it's left me. We will be back at 1:30 of the clock tomorrow.

*The House adjourned at 1802.*



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**Legislative Assembly  
of Ontario**

First Session, 36th Parliament

**Assemblée législative  
de l'Ontario**

Première session, 36<sup>e</sup> législature

**Official Report  
of Debates  
(Hansard)**

**Journal  
des débats  
(Hansard)**

**Wednesday 12 February 1997**

**Mercredi 12 février 1997**

Speaker  
Honourable Chris Stockwell

Clerk  
Claude L. DesRosiers

Président  
L'honorable Chris Stockwell

Greffier  
Claude L. DesRosiers





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# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 12 February 1997

# ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 12 février 1997

*The House met at 1333.  
Prayers.*

## MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

### EDUCATION LEGISLATION

**Mrs Lyn McLeod (Fort William):** The bully government that brought us Bill 26 a year ago is at it again, steamrolling legislation that brings about major changes to the way we are governed and the way vital services are provided. In this case, what is at risk with this government's agenda is the future of public education itself.

Today we will vote on second reading of Bill 104, and only three opposition speakers in total have been heard.

On Monday we begin hearings on Bill 104, dealing with the amalgamation of school boards, an item on which 951 people have already asked to make their concerns known before those hearings have even been advertised. But this government wants this bill fast, just like the megacity bill, so it can just roll along and do whatever it is it wants to do next. That means at least 1,000 people are going to be shut out and won't be heard on an issue that will affect generations of future students.

This government, over and over again, has shown a contempt for public opinion. We saw that clearly in the refusal to have hearings outside Queen's Park on municipal amalgamation. We saw it clearly when the Minister of Education locked out the parents of Annette Street public school who thought they should have some share in a discussion about the education of their children. Now we see it again, almost 1,000 people shut out by a government that is in a big hurry to give sweeping new powers to a non-elected, non-accountable commission. Even the limited hearings we do have are probably a sham, because this government is not likely to listen with only one afternoon on third reading.

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Thank you.

### STELPIPE LABOUR DISPUTE

**Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold):** Let me tell you, Mr Speaker, in Welland the 386 workers at Stelpipe Page-Hersey were forced on to a picket line November 1 of last year and remain there because of Stelpipe's refusal to negotiate. Only three times at the table, once for 10 minutes, once for 45 minutes and the last time for a mere 10 minutes when Stelpipe, in the most disappointing and cynical of bullying tactics, announced it was pulling its offer off the table.

Those workers, members of Local 523 from the Canadian Auto Workers, are seeking the most modest of improvements in their wage package, seeking some parity

with other Stelco operations in the wages there, and seeking some decency for pension benefits well deserved by hardworking workers at that operation who have made profits for that company year in and year out.

I'm going to tell you, Mr Speaker, Stelpipe may think it has licence from this Harris government to beat up on workers and to attack trade unionists and to attack collective bargaining, but Mitch Labrie, the very capable shop chair of these workers, has the full support of those 386 striking Stelpipe workers, and those Stelpipe workers have the full support of their community: small business, seniors, other workers, young people and myself included.

I'm proud to be out there, as I have been, on the picket line with these Stelpipe workers as they're seeking some modest justice for working people in that workplace. Stelpipe won't win this game.

### WOMEN'S SHELTER

**Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland):** Recently I had the opportunity to attend the opening ceremonies of the Northumberland shelter and resource centre in Cobourg, operated by Northumberland Services for Women. This facility provides shelter and support throughout Northumberland county to women and children seeking immediate refuge from abusive situations.

Before construction of this new facility, up to 14 women and children shared three bedrooms and one bathroom. Now they will have the opportunity to begin confronting the problems with some measure of privacy. The more central location of the new shelter also addresses the past problem of access for those with limited or no mobility.

Women will also have access to a resource centre located beside the shelter. This centre provides women with follow-up counselling, as the average length of stay is only 14 days.

This project reached fruition through the coordinated efforts of many dedicated people. I extend a special thank you to Mrs Anita Blackwood, the chair of the board of the Northumberland Services for Women and the chair of the shelter committee.

The government of Ontario demonstrated its support for protecting women and children in this province by providing some \$960,000 in grant money, which in combination with the agency's fund-raising efforts made this new and much-needed facility a reality in the county of Northumberland.

### HOSPITAL RESTRUCTURING

**Mr Sean G. Conway (Renfrew North):** In my part of eastern Ontario, as in much of the rest of the province,



hospital closures, bed closures and deep cuts to the health and hospital programs are the central issue facing the community.

In Pembroke, just before Christmas of last year, the hospital restructuring commission came to town and slammed the door shut on a century-old public hospital, the Pembroke Civic Hospital, and in so doing took away not only a century-old facility but removed \$14 million from the hospital budget of our community.

Last week the Ministry of Health came to town again and removed \$1.6 million in annual funding to public hospitals in Deep River, Barry's Bay, Renfrew and Arnprior. That means that in the last six weeks the Ontario government has removed over \$16 million from hospital budgets in my part of eastern Ontario. They are doing so, they say, on the basis of some new hospital bed standard.

I ask again today, as I did some weeks ago, to the Minister of Health, I want to see the list of any and all Ontario hospitals that are currently meeting this new bed standard. Thus far, I have no list and I'm beginning to believe that I'm not going to get one because none exists.

1340

#### MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

**Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine):** You will know that day after day I have been rising during members' statements to tell the Legislature about community meetings I've been attending. My colleagues and many people in this House are now attending two to three meetings a night, all revolving around citizens coming together to discuss this government's proposed changes to our local governance, the megacity bill, and also to discuss changes to the education system through Bill 104. I have to tell you that at every meeting I go to there are hundreds of people, and as I leave, those hundreds of people are exiting with anger and real disgust at the way in which this government is proceeding.

People do not want to see a government just ram through legislation without listening to them, and that's the feeling they have; that's what they see. I hear words describing the government that they're bull-headed, that they're arrogant, that their approach is completely dismissive of citizen input. I'm sure the government doesn't want to be labelled that way, but unless you listen to people, those labels are going to continue. In all my years of political activity, before being elected and since being elected, I have never seen citizens so upset, so concerned and so ready to come out and have their voices heard.

Parents in my riding are meeting regularly about the education changes now. They are absolutely opposed to them. Large meetings are being held school by school; petitions are coming in and later today I'll be presenting these. Their voices will be heard.

#### SPECIAL OLYMPICS

**Mr Jack Carroll (Chatham-Kent):** Last week three Ontario centres hosted athletes from 80 countries that took part in the 1997 Special Olympics World Winter Games, the first time these games had been held in Canada. These special athletes demonstrated with determination and pride that doing your best to achieve a goal can be as rewarding as reaching it. My congratulations to

the games organizers, the coaches, volunteers, supporters and to the host communities of Toronto, Collingwood and Duntroon for giving these athletes memories they will cherish forever.

This summer, Chatham-Kent will be host to the Ontario Special Olympics Games. From August 7 to 10, more than 850 Special Olympics athletes and coaches from 12 Ontario regions will arrive in Kent county to participate in such events as softball, soccer and track and field events. The event will also serve as a qualifying competition for the national summer games being held in 1998. Throughout the Chatham-Kent area, hundreds of volunteers, under the guidance of police constable Peter Bakker, who serves as chair of the games, are already hard at work making sure everything is ready for that wonderful week in August.

Special athletes from all parts of Ontario will gather in Chatham-Kent to spend a week in competition. They'll be treating the rest of us to marvellous displays of sportsmanship and skill. I'm sure all members join me in wishing them a successful event, and I extend an invitation to everyone across the province to attend the Ontario Special Olympics —

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Thank you.

#### HEALTH SERVICES

**Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines):** Another step in the direction of the Americanization of our health care system became evident with the news that Rural/Metro Corp is moving into Ontario by combining with seven privately run services already here in our province. Rural/Metro Corp now provides emergency services to more than 200 American communities and is looking to expand in a big way into the Ontario market, beginning with the half-million population it will serve as a result of its initial merger.

With the Harris government decision to dump responsibility for ambulance services on to the lap of municipalities, along with so many other items, it is obvious that the giant health care corporations in the United States would move in like vultures to grab a service that many municipalities are reluctant to take on.

With profit as their motive, will the US health care companies want payment up front and a far higher price for their services? It would be a sad day indeed when patients would have to produce their credit cards before entering an ambulance and incur huge costs for transportation and supplies. How many vulnerable people, faced with a higher price tag and an obligation to pay for ambulance services up front, will opt for a ride in a non-emergency vehicle unable to proceed rapidly and without proper lifesaving equipment?

The Premier should do what is right: retain ambulance services as a provincial funding responsibility and ensure that patient care, not profit, is the major consideration in the delivery of Ontario health care services.

#### MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

**Mr Len Wood (Cochrane North):** My statement today is on the restructuring and the effects of the bully Bill 26, the effect it's having on the downloading and restructuring of the municipalities in northern Ontario.



In the past year mayors, reeves and town councillors across the province have been working hard to fully analyse the impacts of this government's sweeping reforms that will dramatically affect all municipalities of Ontario. Municipal leaders say there are a large number of issues to be addressed but nobody at the government or the ministry knows the answer.

They are also facing a dilemma: Either they come up with an amalgamation plan of their own and restructure and reduce the administrators and elected leaders or they will face the risk of having something shoved down their throats. In fact, this government plans to introduce legislation within the next few weeks to force non-organized territories and municipalities to amalgamate and plans to eliminate up to 500 municipalities across the province. The amalgamation of smaller municipalities with bigger towns demanded by this government will mean the loss of the distinct character and autonomy for the small towns administrated by the larger centres.

When asked about the \$1-billion transition fund for municipalities at the ROMA convention, the parliamentary assistant said that only municipalities which are voluntarily bringing an alternative plan to the restructuring imposed by the government will be eligible for this funding. The status quo means that you are on your own — no dollars. In other words, your government has no respect for democracy and is holding its heavy-handed measure over their heads. You're telling them to swallow the poison or they'll get shot. Some choice.

#### BRANTFORD HOSPITALS

**Mr Ron Johnson (Brantford):** I rise in the House today to applaud and congratulate two hospitals in my riding for their innovative efforts in saving money.

St Joseph's Hospital in Brantford, long-known for finding cost efficiencies by maximizing its economies of scale through group purchasing as part of the St Joseph's health care system, has spearheaded a six-hospital group purchase of hip and knee replacement implants, including additional accessory items routinely used during joint replacement surgery, which will see overall savings of more than \$1 million for the six hospitals involved over the next four years. More than \$432,000 of those savings will benefit St Joseph's Hospital in Brantford as well as the Brantford General Hospital.

This represents an unprecedented agreement between 18 orthopaedic surgeons at six different hospitals to standardize the type of implants used in these procedures. Equally as important, it signals a recognition that we can find savings in new and creative ways if we are willing to look for them. The money saved on the implants will be reinvested by each of the hospitals involved on other priority items.

Again, I offer my congratulations to the creativity and innovative spirit of cooperation shown by each of the six hospitals as they ably demonstrate their commitment to patients in Brantford.

#### COMMISSIONERS OF ESTATE BILLS

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** I beg to inform the House that the Clerk has received a report and

required amendments from the commissioners of estate bills with respect to Bill Pr63, An Act respecting the Bank of Nova Scotia Trust Company, Montreal Trust Company of Canada and Montreal Trust Company.

Accordingly, pursuant to standing order 86(e), the bill stands referred to the standing committee on regulations and private bills.

#### SPEAKER'S RULINGS

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** I have some rulings dealing with various concerns raised by members before question period on Thursday, February 6, 1997, and a further ruling in response to a point of privilege raised on Monday, February 10, 1997, and I'm fairly sure you're all interested.

I ended up doing more research than I anticipated, but I thought it was warranted in view of the importance of the matters raised.

The member for Algoma (Mr Wildman) inquired as to whether the Speaker had taken or would be taking steps to ensure that the assembly was informed of the impending criminal charges against the member for Welland-Thorold.

Let me confirm at the outset that I have received no official notice that the member for Welland-Thorold was going to be or has been charged, nor would I expect to.

However, I am not convinced that the assembly is obliged to receive notice that the member for Welland-Thorold will be or has been arrested. That view was not immediately obvious to me because, as the member for Algoma indicated, citation 88 in Beauchesne indicates that "from British practice it would seem that if a member is arrested the House should be informed, through the Speaker, by the judge or magistrate concerned."

1350

I want to make the following observations on this reference:

First, given that the member for Welland-Thorold had yet to make an appearance in a court of law, I have some difficulty understanding how it could be that the House is supposed to receive a notice from a judge or magistrate.

Second, the authority for this citation from Beauchesne is a specific passage from Erskine May, a passage that makes clear that it applies to a member who is being detained from service in Parliament.

Third, the citation indicates that it has never been invoked with respect to the Parliament of Canada.

Finally, my review of recent instances in which a member of this assembly has been arrested suggests that there is no practice to the effect that the House or the Speaker receives notice of a member's impending arrest. It is not necessary for me to determine whether or not the House must be informed of the arrest of a member in circumstances where the arrest is accompanied by detention from service in Parliament, since that is not the situation that the member for Welland-Thorold finds himself in as of Thursday.

The closest this House has ever come to receiving official notice of criminal process against a member of the House was on June 27, 1977, when a judge's letter to the Speaker and the Clerk of the House was tabled in the



House. The letter indicated that the judge had committed a member of the House to prison for refusing to testify as a witness at a preliminary hearing. That case is easily distinguishable from the case involving the member for Welland-Thorold.

In view of these observations and findings, I find that the interesting point raised by the member for Algoma does not raise a matter of order or privilege.

On a separate but related matter, the member for Rainy River (Mr Hampton) and the member for Beaches-Woodbine (Ms Lankin) expressed some concerns relating to remarks made by the Attorney General (Mr Harnick) in this House on November 7, 1996, about an incident involving the member for Welland-Thorold (Mr Kormos) and the member for Sudbury East (Ms Martel). The government House leader (Mr Johnson) and the Minister of Environment and Energy (Mr Sterling) spoke to these concerns.

Before I respond, I want to be very clear about two things: First, the Speaker cannot decide a legal or constitutional matter. Second, I do not want to say anything in this ruling that will prejudice the disposition of any legal proceeding relating to the November 7 incident. In getting those two statements on the record, I am not saying that the member for Rainy River or the member for Beaches-Woodbine has asked me to do otherwise: I am simply conveying how I intend to comply with standing order 13.

The member for Rainy River specifically mentioned the standing orders dealing with sub judice. Standing order 23(g) states that it is out of order for any member to make reference to any matter that is "pending in a court or before a judge for judicial determination or that is before any quasi-judicial body constituted by the House or by or under the authority of an act of the Legislature." Now, my reading of that ruling is that sub judice applies to cases pending before a court or quasi-judicial body. This does not include matters pending or under police investigation. My research on this subject confirms this view.

At the time the Attorney General made the comments in question, I do not believe the matter was the subject of any judicial or quasi-judicial proceeding.

The member for Rainy River also argued that the remarks of the Attorney General on November 7 could be considered as making allegations or imputing motives contrary to standing order 23(h) and (i). I looked back on my ruling of November 18 and while these rules were not explicitly canvassed, it did essentially address the issue of orderliness of those remarks.

The issue raised by the member for Rainy River then is not a point of order.

However, the member for Rainy River also submitted that the remarks amounted to more than a matter of order, they amounted to a breach of privilege and bordered on contempt because they interfered with, showed disrespect for or prejudiced the justice system.

Both the member for Rainy River and the member for Beaches-Woodbine referred to a legal opinion which indicated that the actions of the Attorney General were "inconsistent with constitutional convention."

To these submissions, I have to respond by saying that after reviewing the parliamentary authorities on this issue I cannot see how the members' concerns fall within an existing head of privilege. Similarly, based on what my January 22 ruling had to say about contempt, I do not see how the members' concerns amount to a *prima facie* case of contempt. I will reiterate what I said in my ruling on November 18, that "while this may be a question that will have to be answered by some other authority, it is not a question that can be decided by the Speaker."

The member for Algoma (Mr Wildman) rose on a point of privilege on February 10 with new information on a matter raised previously with respect to the printing of party material at public expense.

Members will know that the provision of funds to the caucuses for print material is administered by the Board of Internal Economy and that there is a policy that governs that funding. All parties — all parties — would be well advised to carefully peruse the established policy.

To the member for Algoma, I have to say that while this does not constitute a point of privilege, it is certainly a matter for consideration at the Board of Internal Economy.

Finally, on the matter that the member for St Catharines (Mr Bradley) raised, he also rose on a question of privilege on February 6 concerning a series of government-sponsored television commercials. I want to say to the member that I have not yet had an opportunity to review the commercials in question, but that I will do so very soon and report back to the House.

## ORAL QUESTIONS

### PROPERTY TAXATION

#### **Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition):**

My question is for the Premier. For weeks now we've been telling you that your numbers were quite clearly wrong. We told you that you were shortchanging Ontario property taxpayers to the tune of \$1 billion. You, of course, told us that we were all wet, that we did not know what we were talking about. In fact, you added that worried municipal officials who were crunching numbers right across the province were whiners when they came to the conclusion, after their work, that this was not a wash.

This morning one of the most senior officials in the Ministry of Finance, Anne Evans, the assistant deputy minister, confirmed what we've been saying all along: When you add up your errors and omissions, we are looking at a \$1-billion property tax hike province-wide.

Premier, the jig is up. The truth is out. Why don't you have the good sense and the decency right here and now to admit that you've made a mistake?

**Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier):** Ms Evans provided some numbers to a reporter who put them down in such a way it omitted the \$800 million that's there for transition assistance, omitted \$700 million that is there, included some numbers that have already been relayed to municipalities and have nothing to do with who does what.



Let me say that one newspaper has numbers, another has numbers, municipalities have numbers, and there's numbers and there's numbers and there are figures. But I want to be very clear about something that's important. Nobody knows for sure, doing things in new ways, what the numbers will be. We have clearly acknowledged this. What we do know is this: If you continue to use numbers attached to programs delivered in the old ways, you will have a \$35-billion deficit in Ottawa, you'll have an \$11-billion deficit here, you'll have a 100% increase in property taxes —

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Thank you, Premier.

**Mr McGuinty:** Premier, let's keep our eye on the ball. We're talking about your numbers produced by a senior official within the Ministry of Finance who tells us that we're looking at a \$1-billion property tax hike to be applied province-wide. That's what we're talking about.

I'm saying that it was a mistake. Someone more cynical would say that you knew that the numbers were wrong and that you were deliberately attempting to hide the fact that you were dumping \$1 billion on to property taxpayers. I, myself, would not say that. I'm claiming that it was a mistake.

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Premier, for three weeks we have been telling you that you've made a \$1-billion mistake. The mayors, the taxpayers federation and the board of trade have been telling you the same thing. Now even senior officials within one of your own ministries, the Ministry of Finance, is confirming what we've been telling you all along. Premier, why don't you just do the right thing? Tell us you've made a \$1-billion mistake.

**Hon Mr Harris:** As fun as it is hitting these things out of the ball park, the Minister of Finance wants to take over.

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker:** Order. Minister.

**Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance):** The assistant Deputy Minister of Finance said no such thing. She did not.

*Interjections.*

**Hon Mr Eves:** I see the chorus is back, Mr Speaker, and they're in tune too today, which is quite unusual.

What was on the front page of the Globe and Mail today was numbers supplied by Gerry Phillips, your finance critic.

*Interjections.*

**Hon Mr Eves:** That's an impartial source, I know.

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker:** Order.

**Hon Mr Eves:** I'll tell you what's wrong with Mr Phillips's numbers of \$1 billion a year. We can go through them —

**Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands):** Anne Evans.

**Hon Mr Eves:** No, they're not Anne Evans's numbers. It's not anywhere quoted in that article attributable to her, absolutely not. It is somebody's interpretation of what Anne Evans said and what Gerry Phillips said. I will explain to you why Mr Phillips's numbers are wrong.

On municipal transit and GO Transit services, Mr Phillips claims the province has underestimated the impact on municipalities by \$70 million. This claim is totally incorrect. Crombie used 1997-98 data. He did not reflect the province's intention to honour the five-year existing TTC capital plan. That number is wrong.

On the cost of ambulance services, Mr Phillips claims that the province underestimated the impact on municipalities by \$50 million. This claim also is incorrect. The \$200-million figure released by the government is the full cost of land ambulance service, which is only part of the ambulance —

**The Speaker:** Thank you, Minister.

*Interjection.*

**The Speaker:** I apologize.

**Mr McGuinty:** Yesterday the Minister of Finance told us the Toronto Star got it wrong. Today he tells us the Globe and Mail got it wrong. Perhaps the Sun should check with the minister to review tomorrow's article before going to print.

Minister, listen, you can call municipal mayors whiners, you can call us wrong, you can say the Canadian Taxpayers Federation is wrong, you can tell us the Canadian Federation of Independent Business is wrong, you can tell us ROMA is wrong, but it's not going to change the fact about the truth. Apparently we're all wrong except the minister and the Premier himself. The truth is that the numbers add up to one thing: a \$1-billion property tax hike to be distributed across this province to Ontario property taxpayers. It's as simple as that.

Minister, your assistant Deputy Minister of Finance tells us the truth about dumping. We got that today. Why don't you tell us the truth right now?

**Hon Mr Eves:** I'd like to see the quote from the honourable member opposite where the assistant deputy minister is quoted as saying this will cost municipalities \$900 million. He can't give me that quote because it doesn't exist; it's a figment of his imagination.

I just came from a meeting with my colleagues the Minister of Municipal Affairs and the Minister of Community and Social Services. We had a very amicable, frank, forthright discussion with AMO, and I can tell you that we came out of that meeting with a very positive sense to set a process in place to discuss with municipalities how we can meet their special needs and accommodate them. We also had a very positive meeting with respect to the fact that we share one thing in common: We both acknowledge that there is only one taxpayer; we acknowledge that property taxes will not go up.

I say to the leader of the official opposition, if municipalities find 2% cost-efficiencies in the services they deliver —

**The Speaker:** Thank you. Minister of Finance, thank you very much.

*Interjection.*

**The Speaker:** Thank you, Minister of Finance.

*Interjection.*

**The Speaker:** I don't want to argue with you. Chief government whip, I'm not into a debate with you. Everyone has the same amount of time to put their question and answer their question. It may indicate that you may agree more with some of the answers and the questions, but nobody gets any more time. New question.



## MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

**Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition):** The question is to the Premier. The Minister of Finance talks about the importance of quotes, and I have one here that I think will be of considerable interest to all members.

I have a copy of the Fergus News Express. It tells the story of a meeting that took place on Monday, September 19, by Mike Harris, the then leader of the third party. The title is, "Harris Presents Common Sense Revolution Mandate to Area Politicians."

"Harris was asked if he's in favour of amalgamation, and he responded, 'There is no cost for a municipality to maintain its name and identity. Why destroy our roots and pride? I disagree with restructuring because it believes that bigger is better. Services always cost more in larger communities.'"

Premier, how can you possibly reconcile this statement with your plans to impose bigger government on so many Ontario communities?

**Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier):** I was in Fergus. We're imposing no large government on the people of Fergus and they're doing very well.

**Mr McGuinty:** You know, this passage is so delicious and so unequivocal that it's worthy of repetition. This was a meeting, by the way, that was attended by a group of 40 municipal politicians and clerks, and Mr Harris then said, on Monday, September 19, the following: "There is no cost for a municipality to maintain its name and identity. Why destroy our roots and pride? I disagree with restructuring because it believes that bigger is better. Services always cost more in larger communities."

I couldn't agree more. Premier, once more, how can you possibly reconcile this statement with what you are doing right now, especially right here in Metropolitan Toronto?

**Hon Mr Harris:** Let me reassure, as I did on September 19, 1994, the people of Fergus that we are not imposing a large government on the people of Fergus, and Fergus will maintain its name.

Let me also say, since you want to translate that into Toronto, that the proposal that we have brought forward is not to add one single person to Metropolitan Toronto, simply to eliminate seven layers of government into one layer of government.

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**Mr McGuinty:** This is painful to watch. It's important to understand what the reason is behind this mega-dumping and the megacity. The reason we're moving forward on this, the reason the Premier is moving forward on this is because it's the only way municipalities across this province are going to be able to possibly find some way to contend with the new costs created by mega-dumping.

Premier, once more: You said, "There is no cost for a municipality to maintain its name and identity." You said, "Why destroy our roots and pride?" You said, "I disagree with restructuring, because it believes that bigger is better." Finally, you said, unequivocally and very, very clearly, "Services always cost more in larger communities," and you said that with complete conviction. So

why is it that you are bent on proceeding with amalgamation in so many communities across the province, but especially here in Metropolitan Toronto?

**Hon Mr Harris:** One of the things that was very evident to the people of Fergus was that services cost more in Metro Toronto than they did in Fergus. And one of the reasons they cost more in Metro Toronto than they did in Fergus was because there were seven layers of government, too many politicians, too many conflicts, too much in-fighting and too many other things going on.

The second thing that the people of Fergus were concerned about, and I am concerned about, was that in any restructuring nobody should lose their identity.

When previous amalgamations were brought forward in Toronto, they tried to take away the identities of some of the communities of Toronto. So while you took the heart out of Toronto with your taxes and you took the heart out of Toronto with the job loss, we not only are putting the heart back in, we're not only putting the tax base back in, we're not only putting the jobs back in, but we also want to bring back the communities: Willowdale, Don Mills, Mimico, Leaside, Swansea, Forest Hill, Weston, the Beaches. We want to put the communities back into Toronto, and our proposal will do that.

## WELFARE COSTS

**Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River):** My question is also to the Premier. Despite the story in the Globe and Mail today which delineates how your government is trying to underestimate the downloading, you still insist it's a wash by the year 2000 and your Minister of Municipal Affairs says it's a wash today. Despite the fact that municipalities across this province are adding up their numbers and know they are going to get hit with massive downloading, you still say, "Oh, there's no problem."

I want to ask you something else that's occurred. Just last month, in January, the general welfare caseload increased: in Durham region by 2.3%; Niagara region by 3%; Toronto by 1.8%; York region by 3.8%; and Hamilton-Wentworth by over 10%. Premier, you say that the costs of social assistance are going to go down but these figures indicate they're going up. Can you explain the discrepancies between your story and the story in the Globe and Mail and the story that the welfare statistics —

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Thank you. Premier.

**Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier):** I know the minister can explain what's happening with welfare in the province and will be proud to do so.

**Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Community and Social Services):** I'm sure the honourable member will be aware that welfare costs in this province have come down since we've taken over the government. We've saved about \$1.3 billion in savings on welfare, the municipalities have saved something like \$140 million to \$150 million in terms of the savings, and we will continue to see savings in the social assistance system as we get workfare up and running.

I would like to remind the honourable member that welfare is a cyclical program. We've always seen that, but we have also demonstrated as a government that it is



possible to manage that program in a way that is sustainable, in a way that manages costs and in a way that makes sure those dollars are there for those people on welfare who need it.

**Mr Hampton:** What I heard from the Minister of Community and Social Services is that she has cut social assistance. We know that, and we know that she is forcing people out on the street. The point is, Minister, that despite all your cuts, despite taking the hatchet to the poorest people in the province, the caseloads continue to rise. Despite all your cuts, the number of people forced on to social assistance — and the January figures are there — continue to rise.

Minister, usually your ministry comes out and trumpets the province-wide caseload numbers right away. For some reason, this month you're holding off. You still haven't released January's numbers. We're left to wonder why. I think we know why.

What is really damaging is that your David Crombie was at ROMA yesterday. It was David Crombie at his best, saying ever so tactfully that Mike Harris should have listened to the Who Does What panel and left social assistance at the province-wide level. Why didn't you listen to David Crombie? Why did the government —

**The Speaker:** Leader, thank you. Minister.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** I'd like to remind the honourable member that we are not booting people off social assistance. The National Council on Welfare's recent report that came out this week confirmed that our welfare rates are 12% above the average of the other provinces, so we still have a very generous system. We also are ensuring, through tighter eligibility, that only those people who need assistance will get that assistance.

**Mrs Elinor Caplan (Oriole):** Ontario has the highest in the country. The number of people in this province —

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** We are also rolling out our workfare across the province to make sure that those people on social assistance can get off and get back into the job force, where most of them want to be and where we want them to be. I would like to remind the honourable member —

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker:** Order. The member for Hamilton East, come to order. I'm warning you. The member for Oriole, come to order. I'm warning you as well. I realize that this issue is hot, but I want some order so I can hear the minister's answer. Thank you. Minister.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. Again, as the honourable member knows, there are cycles in the welfare rates. It is very common for rates to go up in the winter months; that is not unusual. I would like to point him to his own government's record in terms of the outrageous increase of the people trapped on welfare.

**Mr Hampton:** There was one thing that was correct in the minister's answer: that social assistance rates and social assistance caseloads do go up and down, and social assistance caseloads really go up when you get into a recession. What you're doing, as David Crombie said, is you are dumping the costs of social assistance on to municipalities. David Crombie knows, and municipalities know, that those caseload numbers are going to go up in a recession and municipalities won't be able to handle it.

Let me ask you again: David Crombie spent all this time out there working with his panel and he came back with a recommendation. He said: Don't dump social assistance on to municipalities. Municipalities, with only the property tax, will not be able to cover the cost of social assistance.

Why are you dumping this huge cost on to municipalities, a cost which we all know is going to go up? Why are you punishing municipalities like this?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** During the life of this previous government, the honourable member was a member of that government when welfare rates and the number of people trapped on welfare and the costs of welfare —

**Mr Len Wood (Cochrane North):** You are the government now.

**The Speaker:** The member for Cochrane North, I'm warning you to come to order. Minister.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** When welfare rates and the number of people trapped on welfare and the cost of welfare for municipalities were soaring through the stratosphere, I didn't hear the honourable member out there trying to help the municipalities with that cost. What we have done in the Who Does What initiatives is acknowledge that there are cycles in the welfare system, that the need for financial support for municipalities may well occur. That is why we have invested \$700 million up front for a social assistance reserve that will grow to \$1.9 billion. It is there as a rainy day fund. It is there to support those municipalities if they need it.

I would also like to ask the honourable member — he's so fond of quoting Mr David Crombie — Mr Crombie also recommended that perhaps we should be contracting out welfare. Do you support that, sir?

**Mr Hampton:** I would say to the Minister of Community and Social Services, no, we don't support the contracting out, and we don't support the dumping of billions of dollars of costs on to municipalities either.

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#### ATTORNEY GENERAL'S COMMENTS

**Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River):** My next question is to the Premier. On November 7, 1996, the Attorney General inappropriately commented on a police investigation, an investigation which involved two members of the Legislature and that his ministry in fact initiated. To quote the Attorney General in Hansard, he said: "I said there was a break-in. I said it was because there was a break-in." And then later: "In fact, we all know who was involved because they admitted they were there. Ask Kormos what he did to the security guard."

We have an independent legal opinion from a very distinguished professor of law, Alan Young at Osgoode Hall Law School, who says very clearly, "The actions and statements compromise the independence of the office of the Attorney General. His actions and statements compromise the independence of the police."

Premier, do you think it's appropriate for the Attorney General to be reaching conclusions and voicing his opinion on a matter which is the subject of a police investigation?



**Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier):** I understand there are legal opinions, and they can be placed before the judge as this matter is before the judge and the judge will make the appropriate ruling.

**Mr Hampton:** Judges will attempt to look after the legal system as best they can, but unfortunately they can't deal with an Attorney General who interferes in the functioning of the justice system. Someone called the Premier has to do that. Someone called the Premier has to be accountable when the Attorney General improperly interferes.

I put it to you, as Professor Young states: "The actions and statements of the Attorney General on November 7, 1996, were violative of the historical and constitutional traditions of the Attorney General." That's what he says.

Now, Premier, you appoint members of cabinet and it's your responsibility as Premier to ensure that they act in a manner which is consistent with their responsibilities. What actions are you going to take to ensure that the Attorney General is held accountable for the inappropriate and irresponsible remarks he made in the Legislature on November 7, 1996?

**Hon Mr Harris:** I think you're well aware that the minister has explained his comments. There is a lawyer whose opinion you're quoting representing a client who proposes to take that before a judge, and the judge will rule.

**Mr Hampton:** Once again, I think it's evident that the Premier attempts to avoid the gravity of the situation. One of the hallmarks of our justice system is that it remains free from political interference. It is especially a hallmark of our justice system that an Attorney General must not make any comments which might prejudice a police investigation or which might prejudice a trial.

You are the only person who can hold the Attorney General responsible. You are the person who appointed that Attorney General. You are the only person who can make sure that all of this works as it ought to, so I'm going to ask you again. It's incumbent upon you to restore the credibility and integrity of the Attorney General's office. It's incumbent upon you to uphold the integrity of our justice system. I call upon you to ask for the resignation of the Attorney General.

**Hon Mr Harris:** I call on you to listen to your question. Just go through carefully what you've said. You think it's inappropriate for an Attorney General to prejudge a case, comment on a case, comment on anything before the courts. I think it's inappropriate for a Premier to do the same.

#### HOSPITAL FINANCING

**Mr Gerard Kennedy (York South):** My question today is again for the Minister of Health. I want to come back to the issue of the Harris hospital cuts which we raised on Monday. These huge cuts —

*Interjection.*

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Order. Thank you. Member for York South.

**Mr Kennedy:** Minister, the Harris hospital cuts are huge and are harming hospitals. For example, North York General Hospital is now telling us that they're going to

be cutting 35 beds, 13 paediatric beds. They're going to be cutting cleaning services; the seniors' health centre is going to be getting less cleaning. There's less food going to be provided to all the patients because of the Harris hospital cuts. But that's the injury. The insult was your ministry making these cuts 5% larger. The public figures are in contradiction.

Your assistant deputy minister apparently has left the ministry as of yesterday, a day after this has been raised, and it's left to you to explain, to confirm that there are two lists for hospital cuts and to confirm why your ministry is using one of these lists to skim money away from hospitals and making their very difficult job even harder.

**Hon David Johnson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Minister of Health, Government House Leader):** There is no skimming from hospitals. There was a operating funding program set out over a year ago by the Minister of Health. It outlined a three-year operating fund for the hospitals. That program is in conjunction with the JPPC, the joint planning policy committee, composed of hospital administrators, composed of members from the Ontario Hospital Association, composed of members from the Ministry of Health. They have sat down this year and made recommendations to the Ministry of Health in terms of how to translate the funding for the fiscal year 1997-98. The Ministry of Health has conveyed that information to the hospitals. The funding is precisely in line with the JPPC formula and precisely in line with the funding that we committed to one year ago.

**Mr Kennedy:** It is a shame that you will not admit. This is the public list that your former assistant deputy minister released from institutional health, saying what the hospitals would get. We have spoken now to 43 hospitals and every single one of these hospitals has been cut by an extra 5% and the money has been skimmed off. We believe that that money is being used for your so-called reinvestments. This is an issue about whether you can be trusted with the health and wellbeing of Ontarians. You're saying one thing, you have one set of figures publicly and you've got another set of figures that you're sending around privately to hospitals.

Every penny makes a difference to these hospitals, whether those rooms are clean, whether people get nurses to visit them. You said to a reporter on Monday that if there was a nickel more than \$435 million being cut that it would be sent back to hospitals. We have talked to 43 hospitals — we're going to talk to them all — and our estimates are there is going to be not one nickel but 460 million nickels cut from hospitals — \$23 million. Minister, will you confirm to this House today that every penny above the amount that you were originally cutting will go back —

**The Speaker:** Thank you. Minister.

**Hon David Johnson:** I would be delighted to confirm to this House today that every nickel, if there is — indeed, I'm convinced and I'm committed that there is not anything more than the \$435 million, but if it can be determined that anything beyond one penny beyond the \$435 million has been reduced from the hospitals, then I will guarantee you that we will give that money back to the hospitals.



We have lived within the precise formula put down by the JPPC with the total amount of money. The funding that was committed one year ago was a 6% reduction; the average is precisely a 6% reduction. I will say that there will not be a penny more than 8% to any particular hospital and there will not be a penny more than \$435 million in total reductions to the hospitals. I will guarantee that.

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## ONTARIO LABOUR RELATIONS BOARD

**Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre):** My question is to the Premier. Now that the courts have ruled that your government acted illegally in firing three vice-chairs of the Ontario Labour Relations Board, it's time to return to the issue of the contempt charges pending against the Chair of Management Board. This case has been blocked for months, for three reasons: first, as a result of the illegal action by the Premier's office in the firing of three vice-chairs; second, because the government at first denied any involvement, but later conceded when the case came to court that the Premier's office was in fact involved in this political purge; third, because the Minister of Labour has refused to allow appointment of an independent adjudicator from outside Ontario to hear this case.

Now the court decision is in. Premier, will you commit today that the contempt charges against the Chair of Management Board will be heard promptly by an independent outside adjudicator?

**Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier):** I appreciate the question, and I know the member would want to make sure it got on the record that on page 7 of the ruling he's talking about, the court completely rejected the argument that any action taken by this government challenged the independence of the Ontario Labour Relations Board, that it would be brought into question through that action. That was page 7 of the ruling. I know you would want to make sure to draw people's attention to page 7 of that ruling because I think that was the most significant part of it.

With regard to the other, the Minister of Labour is not here today and that's a separate issue and a separate question. When the Minister of Labour returns, I'd be pleased to speak with her about the status of that matter.

**Mr Christopherson:** Premier, what I want to bring to your attention and that of the public is the fact that it was your office that has caused the litigation, confusion and gridlock at the labour board. It's the role of your office in deciding which members of the Ontario Labour Relations Board would be fired that's at the heart of this matter.

At first, your government even tried to deny that this happened, but when that coverup failed, you were forced to concede the point in court. Premier, what have you done to investigate this illegal action, what steps have you taken to determine who in your office was responsible for this breach of the law, and what will you do to make sure it never happens again?

**Hon Mr Harris:** You will know there has been a downsizing that we approved in cabinet, and we will con-

tinue to approve downsizing wherever there is a surplus of people who are there. Page 7 of the ruling authorizes our right to do that and suggests that the way we did it did nothing to bring the independence of the Ontario Labour Relations Board into question. Given the support of the ruling on page 7, we intend to carry on getting the best deal we can for the taxpayers of Ontario.

## FAMILY SUPPORT PLAN

**Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier):** Mr Speaker, I wish to respond to a question that was asked yesterday by the member for Sudbury East. I might add that in doing so, I can provide an answer to the question of the member for Welland-Thorold at the same time.

Yesterday the member for Sudbury East and the member for Welland-Thorold raised three examples of family support program cases in the House. While you will know that I cannot provide details of the cases, I am pleased to report today that I raised these with the ministry and, due to the tremendous job the minister has done in getting that ministry up and running, all three cases have been resolved.

I also would like to say to the member for Sudbury East —

**Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands):** Give them the 1-800 number.

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Member for Kingston and The Islands, come to order. I'm warning you.

**Hon Mr Harris:** The office would like to not only thank and congratulate the minister for giving them the tools, but the office also wished to thank the member for Sudbury East for her help and cooperation —

**Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor-Sandwich):** Do you know how many we have in Windsor waiting for a call from the Premier's office?

**Mr Frank Miclash (Kenora):** You will get every single one of them tomorrow.

**The Speaker:** The member for Windsor-Sandwich. The member for Kenora.

**Mrs Pupatello:** On a point of personal privilege, Speaker.

**The Speaker:** There is no personal privilege, but there is privilege. Wait until — okay, fine.

**Hon Mr Harris:** The staff also reported to me that they wish to thank the member for Sudbury East's office for its cooperation and just to let everybody know we appreciate bringing forward any examples. We are pleased to report that these three have all been dealt with.

**The Speaker:** Supplementary, member for Sudbury East.

**Ms Shelley Martel (Sudbury East):** I don't know where the Premier is getting his information from. Let me tell him about the cases, because we've been following up on them this morning.

Diane Burke's case: That is the second time I have had to raise that case in this Legislature. I raised her case in November. I was told then that it would be fixed. I was told by the Attorney General's staff yesterday that it was the employer's fault because the employer wasn't putting the correct information on the cheque. I'd ask you, Mr



Premier, if you can find out why in November someone didn't call the employer and tell them what kind of information they would have to put on so that her cheques weren't delayed for another two months.

Suzanne Beauvais's case is not solved. We just finished talking to the Attorney General's staff before I got in this House. They were telling me that no payment has been made to the FSP by the payor, but Ms Beauvais is telling us that she has talked to the payor, her ex-husband, and he is submitting payments, so that claim is not fixed either.

Maybe you can deal with the 14 other cases that came into my constituency office last night, Premier. It is an insult for you to come in here today and say these have been fixed when they have not. We have a serious ongoing problem —

**The Speaker:** The member for Sudbury East, come to order. Premier.

**Hon Mr Harris:** I want to thank the member for bringing any of these cases to our attention, and just to congratulate the very hardworking, dedicated OPSEU —

**Mr Miclash:** You will have every one of them in question period tomorrow. Within 20 minutes you will have all of mine.

*Interjection.*

**The Speaker:** Members for Kenora and Windsor-Sandwich, if you don't come to order, I'll name you. Premier.

**Hon Mr Harris:** I'd like to congratulate the very dedicated OPSEU members who work in the program for their expediency in being able to resolve these. I'd also like to quote, if I might, from Lynn Vinette, who is the director of the family support plan, who indicates to me: "Under previous governments problems could never have been resolved so quickly. As you know, we have greatly improved the service the family support plan provides. In addition, the enforcement measures the government has brought in, including driver's licence suspension and credit bureau reporting, are among the toughest in North America."

I'd like to say that this system is not perfect. We're not dealing in a perfect world when we try to enforce orders. We have a variety of difficulties in collecting this money. But let me just thank all members of the House and really congratulate the minister and the ministry —

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker:** New question.

#### ASSISTED HOUSING

**Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-Walkerville):** My question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Could you confirm today in the House what your ministry's estimates are of the cost of downloading social housing, operating cost and capital, in total, and will you provide this House with a list, municipality by municipality, of those costs?

**Hon Al Leach (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing):** As the member from Windsor is aware, I'm sure, the federal government has announced it wants to get out of the social housing business, as we have indicated we want to get out of the "social housing

business, and provide it at the level of government that best provides it.

We're currently in discussions with the federal government on how that responsibility and the costs for that responsibility, including the cost of capital repairs for that program, are going to be dissolved down to the province and then ultimately down to the municipalities.

We know there is a lot of work that needs to be carried out in social housing, after being left in a state of disrepair for the last decade. We know that. We know that there is a tremendous need to get capital money into that program and we're working on that right now.

1440

**Mr Duncan:** The offer the federal government has made to each province in this country is that it will transfer the dollars down to the provinces as well as the responsibility.

Senior officials at your ministry have provided me with estimates that range as high as \$1.4 billion in total for social housing. Let me give you a breakdown: municipal non-profit, \$308 million; cooperative non-profit housing, \$247 million; private non-profit housing, \$461 million; total non-profit, \$1.017 billion; OHC rural and native programs, \$352 million; rent supplements over and above privately owned buildings, \$80,953,000; for a grand total of \$1.4 billion, not including capital, not including the estimates associated with reinvesting to make our dilapidated public housing stock better quality.

Minister, will you now acknowledge that this will cost property taxpayers hundreds of dollars each right across this province and come clean with your numbers —

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** The member for Windsor-Walkerville, come to order. Minister.

**Hon Mr Leach:** To the member for Windsor, I recognize that they let social housing stock fall into disrepair, but I was a bit surprised that the member is that high. I just think it's a shame that over the last decade those two governments allowed social housing to fall into a state of disrepair that it's going to cost the taxpayers hundreds of millions of dollars to put in.

This government intends to address that problem. We're addressing it in our negotiations with the federal government and we're addressing it in our negotiations with the municipal government. I'd like to assure the taxpayers of Ontario that we're going to carry out the repairs to social housing in the most cost-effective, economical way possible. We'll try and fix the mess you guys left over the last decade.

#### CHILD CARE

**Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine):** My question is to the Minister of Community and Social Services. About 20 minutes ago I received some very disturbing information. I've been told that your ministry has announced the health and safety minor capital funding for Metropolitan Toronto child care centres and that the allocation decisions have already been made. Two things about this are very disturbing.

For the first time in the history of child care, those allocation decisions have been made without any normal process of consultation with the community. More shock-



ingly, for the first time we are told that you are going to hand out taxpayers' dollars, public money, to the private for-profit, commercial sector. Minister, in these days of massive cutbacks, how can you defend giving away taxpayers' dollars to private for-profit businesses?

**Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Community and Social Services):** I am not aware of what the member is referring to because this government is not in the habit of giving away taxpayers' dollars to anyone. We are in the habit of investing that money where it should be invested: in services for those who are in need. We have not made any capital decisions that I am aware of.

The other thing I would like to say to the honourable member is in terms of child care, that what is important is the quality of the child care being provided. Whether the sector or the operator is a non-profit operator or a private sector operator, the questions are: Are they meeting the qualifications under the legislation? Are they meeting the test of quality for parents that parents put on child care or the community? Those are the things I think we should be most interested in: Are they meeting the test of quality at an affordable price for those parents who need that day care?

**Ms Lankin:** Your officials have informed members of the child care community in Metropolitan Toronto today that the allocation is \$1.4 million, that the allocation decisions to specific centres have been made and that for the first time in history for-profit commercial centres are going to receive those health and safety minor capital dollars.

I remind you of the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism's statement that your government is not into giving handouts to private business, that they can stand on their own two feet. I also remind you that in the child care field it is very clear that there is no accountability in the private sector for where those dollars go. In the not-for-profit sector they have to account for every dollar being invested in the business. In the commercial sector, that money can go straight into the business owner's bank account.

Minister, this is absolutely wrongheaded. You have got proposals out there for reforming the child care system. You have not completed your consultations. We've got no announcements on the specifics of that. Here is one of your proposed reforms that you're moving ahead on. You must stop that. Please direct your officials to hold up that announcement and to reverse that decision.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** I would be very concerned if the honourable member is saying that those people in child care who may be in the private sector are not meeting the regulations and the tough quality standards that we have, because if she is, that's a serious allegation and I would encourage her to bring forward that information so that our ministry can take the steps that are necessary to protect the safety of those children.

I'm more interested in meeting the test of parents. Do those child care centres meet the needs that the parents and the children have? I'm more interested in whether those child care centres are meeting the test of quality and those tough standards. The member may wish to take an ideological approach to this and say that one kind of operator is more acceptable than another kind of operator. I'm interested in better quality child care.

## FUEL SPILL

**Mr John R. Baird (Nepean):** I have a question for the Minister of Environment and Energy. There's a good deal of concern in my region of the province, particularly from those in the agricultural community. Earlier this week we learned of the significant leak of unleaded gasoline from a pipeline in the Ottawa-Carleton area. Could the minister update the House on this important issue and advise us of what actions he and his ministry are taking to ensure the successful containment and cleanup of this spill?

**Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Environment and Energy):** There indeed was a large spill, the largest spill since at least 1988 in the environment, that happened early this week when 250,000 litres of unleaded gasoline were spilled into the environment. This came from a pipeline in the township of Osgoode which happens to be located, unfortunately, in my own riding of Carleton. The pipeline now has been shut off and the gasoline has been removed from a contained area. It took some 25 tankloads of gasoline to remove this.

Officials from my ministry have been on the scene since it happened, along with the Osgoode township fire department, and they have acted in the best interests of the people there. This morning I toured the site with the people in the area, the residents of the nearby farms, to assure them that the initial testing done by the Ministry of Environment ensured there was no contamination to their drinking water.

Under section 8 of the Environmental Protection Act, the northern —

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Thank you, Minister. You can get the rest on the supplementary.

**Mr Baird:** The public places a significant priority on environmental protection. Could the minister give the people of Osgoode and Ottawa-Carleton assurances that a full investigation will take place so that we can work to ensure that adequate measures can be taken to ensure we can prevent this type of accident from happening in the future?

**Hon Mr Sterling:** As I was saying, the initial and most of the obligation falls on the owner of the pipeline, Trans-Northern, and they are at the site accepting their full responsibility for the cleanup at this time and have assured me that they will compensate the farmers in the area.

As I was mentioning before, the federal government is involved, as they are responsible for the operation of pipelines like this. They have an investigation ongoing at the site at the present time and are keeping officials in my ministry fully notified of this. I am, however, concerned about the fact that under our present standards there seems to be only a requirement for shutoff valves to be very, very widely located, in this case 20 miles apart from each other, and therefore it was very hard to contain the spill to a reasonable level. I will be contacting the National Energy Board at the federal level to have them look at these standards to see if in fact they are reasonable.

**The Speaker:** Answer, please.



**Hon Mr Sterling:** I believe we can constrain this kind of accident in the future. We're going to get to the bottom of this. We have been assured by the perpetrators that —

**The Speaker:** Thank you, Minister. New question.  
1450

#### MACASSA LODGE

**Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East):** My question is to the Minister of Health. If you'll recall, last week I rose in the House to ask you about the \$8.5 million that your government has cut out of Macassa Lodge for much-needed renovations to this senior facility in the region. You stated you would review the situation and get back to us. The following day a letter was received by the region stating the following: "Given the current fiscal environment, the minister has reviewed your project in the context of the government's current priorities, and funding for this project cannot be considered at this time."

As I said last week, this is a home for senior citizens, average 85 years, very frail. They're now organizing petitions. They are now concerned about the future viability of the place they call home and the condition it is in, and your government has chosen to cut them off at the knees and withdraw the \$8.5 million in health and safety repairs. This is not luxury; this is not adding rooms.

Now that you've had a week, Minister, will you reinstate the funding that you cut from Macassa Lodge?

**Hon David Johnson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Minister of Health, Government House Leader):** This is an issue that has been raised by the members opposite, and I will say that the member for Hamilton Mountain has talked to me about this very matter on a couple of occasions and brought this to my attention.

The problem faced by the government is that when we took office there were some \$3 billion worth of health-related capital projects — many of these projects had been announced by the previous government, but I will say that some of the projects dated back to before 1990, so some of the projects came out of the former Liberal government — yet on an annualized basis, no more than \$200 million or so is allocated to these projects. So there was a huge backlog and not sufficient funding.

We prioritize the projects, we look to see if they have implications for the restructuring commission, whether they address gaps in service or whether they have gone to tender. If they meet those criteria, then we go ahead; if they don't, they'll be re-evaluated as circumstances —

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Thank you, Minister. Supplementary.

**Mr Agostino:** I'm absolutely astonished by the callousness and the coldness in the minister's answer. You don't get it, Minister. We're talking about a residence; senior citizens, 85 years of age on average. We're not talking about luxury renovations here. We're talking about senior citizens who can't take a shower because it changes from cold to hot. We're talking about senior citizens who don't have air-conditioning facilities and

their lives are threatened in warm weather. We're talking about safety railings. We're talking about bathroom facilities that have to be shared by six people. We're talking about tubs that are rusting away.

Minister, this is a basic health and safety priority you don't seem to understand. It was approved in 1995; it wasn't approved back in the 1980s. Your own member said it best. He said, "It is unconscionable." That was the member for Hamilton Mountain. You should listen to him.

Again, in view of the conditions, will you commit today to reinstate the funding to Macassa Lodge and not put these senior citizens through hell trying to fight you through petitions and letters to the House?

**Hon David Johnson:** I really don't need a lecture from the member opposite on senior citizens. I represented a municipality, East York, for many years —

**Mr Agostino:** Can you help Macassa Lodge by not screwing them?

**The Speaker:** You'll have to withdraw that. You're out of order.

**Mr Agostino:** I withdraw.

**Hon David Johnson:** I represented a municipality for many years, East York, where 17% of the population are senior citizens. I raised funds for the local homes for the aged. I'm an honorary member of Meals on Wheels in East York. I understand seniors and the needs of seniors. I also understand —

**Mr Agostino:** Why did you cut this money out of Macassa?

**The Speaker:** Member for Hamilton East, I'm going to name you if you do it again.

**Hon David Johnson:** I also understand that if the member opposite wanted to be helpful, perhaps he would talk to his colleagues in Ottawa — Mr Martin and Mr Chrétien — and say, "Why have you reduced \$2 billion from health care funding in Ontario?" That's what we're having to deal with. And he might ask his own party and the New Democratic Party why they stockpiled \$3 billion in projects and did not fund them when they were in government.

#### PROPERTY TAXATION

**Mr Rosario Marchese (Fort York):** My question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs. Last week the city of Toronto put out some estimates of the impact on small businesses of your mega-download and your market value assessment scheme. They estimate, for example, that a local barber will pay \$5,996 more because of your downloading and market value assessment. They add to that that a variety store, for example, will pay \$18,000 more. An electronics store will get an increase of \$8,200; a dry cleaner will get a tax hike of \$20,000. There's a long list.

I want to ask you this. Small business actually believes that you are their friend. They don't know that they are about to be whacked by a tax increase. What have you to say to console them?

**Hon Al Leach (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing):** The first thing that I would like to clarify for the member of the third party is that we're not introduc-



ing market value assessment in Ontario. We're introducing the Ontario fair tax system, which will be a fair tax for everybody in this province and eliminate the terrible system we have now that is totally unfair and totally inequitable.

With respect to small businesses, if there is any sector that is going to benefit from the new fair and equitable tax system that we're bringing in in the province, it's going to be the small retailer, particularly the small retailer in Toronto. We specifically set up a method that will ensure that small businesses, which were going to be destroyed under the system that you were considering, will be protected in a fair and equitable way.

**Mr Marchese:** This tax is not about fairness. People are about to be whacked by a property tax increase. In fact, they're going to be whacked by this fair tax bill, whether it's actual value assessment or market value — and I don't see too much difference between the two — they're going to be whacked. I've got a long list provided by the city of Toronto that shows clearly incredible tax increases for small businesses in Toronto. You're going to see empty storefronts as part of the megacity's future if these changes go ahead. Mike Harris has become a Taxhiker not a Taxfighter. Explain yourselves to the small business people in Toronto again, Mr Minister. I want to hear you again explain that.

**Hon Mr Leach:** To the member of the third party, nothing could be further from the truth than the comments that were just made. We are setting up a system of property assessment that is going to be of major benefit to small businesses right across Ontario, and particularly to small businesses in Metropolitan Toronto, particularly the small businesses on Yonge Street and on Bayview and on St Clair. All of those small businesses that were going to be hammered as a result of that ill-fated market value system that was under consideration by your government will be addressed by putting in an equitable Ontario fair tax system right across the province, finally fixing that broken-down property tax assessment that those two parties refused to deal with when they were in power.

1500

#### FAMILY SUPPORT PLAN

**Mrs Sandra Papatello (Windsor-Sandwich):** On a point of privilege, Mr Speaker: I raise a point of privilege that I hope the Speaker can address for me, how I, as a member in this House, can somehow find the same level of privileges that other members have been accorded in this House, specifically relating to the family support cases from Windsor-Sandwich that have been delivered to the Attorney General, that have been reported here in the House, but I have not had action on my issues from my riding.

Today the Premier stands and addresses personally his own intervention on cases for other members. Speaker, I need to know how I get myself elevated to a level of privilege —

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** I think it would be fairly safe to warn everybody now, actually. I don't think that's a point of privilege. Maybe it —

**Mrs Papatello:** Mr Speaker, on a point of order —

**The Speaker:** Let me deal with the point of privilege first. It's not a point of privilege. I understand the concern you have and all I can tell you is it's probably a question for the House, but as a privilege point of view, it is not within the Speaker's domain. If you have a point of order, I'll hear that.

**Mrs Papatello:** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I need to understand how I, as member for Windsor-Sandwich, can elevate my issues from my riding in an order that would warrant the Premier's intervention on my case —

**The Speaker:** Again, I can only suggest to you I haven't got any control over the Premier's agenda or what he chooses to investigate or not to investigate and you'll have to take that up with the Premier.

*Interjections.*

**Mr John R. Baird (Nepean):** Order. We can't hear you.

**The Speaker:** Order. Member for Nepean. Thank you.

**Mrs Lyn McLeod (Fort William):** On a point of privilege, Mr Speaker: Not on the point that's raised by the member for Windsor-Sandwich, but I do ask you to consider the dilemma which is posed for the conduct of the business of members of this assembly. Clearly we have at least two areas in which we operate. One is our constituency offices, where we do the work assigned to us in representing our constituents. The other is in the work we do right here in this assembly.

It was made clear today through the Premier's response to the question from the member for Sudbury East that he feels if he can personally be made aware of the questions of the specific cases that we in our constituency offices are dealing with, he will give them personal attention and they will get immediately resolved.

Mr Speaker, I have to tell you that's what my constituents have heard this afternoon as a result of our public deliberations in this forum. The message that goes back to them — my staff, as with the staff, I venture to say, of every member of this assembly, are spending hours of time dealing with the family support cases and the frustration of constituents who can't get their payments. What all those constituents heard today was that the way to get the case solved is to bring it into the House.

I'm asking you, Mr Speaker, as a point of privilege and it follows the member for Windsor-Sandwich, you know that in one hour's question period we cannot raise in a question every individual case that is backlogged in our constituency office. I ask you to determine how we can reconcile the message given by the Premier this afternoon to our constituents, and you've just given in your answer —

**The Speaker:** I say to the member for Fort William, it is not up to me to reconcile the questions nor the answers. You can't ask me to begin to deal with the questions and reconcile the concerns you have with respect to privilege.

**Mrs Papatello:** All that paper that's coming tomorrow.

**The Speaker:** The member for Windsor-Sandwich, you can interpret the Premier's answers any way you want to interpret. I'm not going to tell you how and I'm



not going to interpret your questions that you put to them. All I can say to you is, I don't want to get into this, I don't want to get into this game, because I would be immersed and I'd never get out, and it wouldn't be appropriate.

I appreciate your concerns. I can say you can only judge yourself accordingly. I can't be of assistance.

**Mrs McLeod:** With respect, Mr Speaker, you in your ruling, on bringing forward these cases as a question, I submit to you that your ruling is not something we can carry out in the limitations of this House and I want my constituents to know it's virtually impossible. That's the only way to deal with the government. They have put a —

**The Speaker:** Well, you know something? I bet your constituents know that now.

**Mrs Elinor Caplan (Oriole):** On the same point of privilege —

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker:** Same point of privilege. That's very true. I've dealt with the point of privilege, so it's really not the same point. Now, if you have a —

**Mrs Caplan:** Information that you might want to consider.

**The Speaker:** The trouble is that I've ruled. Now, if you have a different point of privilege —

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker:** Okay, on a new point of privilege, the member for Oriole.

**Mrs Caplan:** The point I want to make, Mr Speaker, is that there are many citizens, women with children who are suffering because of the incompetence of this government in dealing with the family support plan, who do not want their names public in this House. The issue of confidentiality is one which is extremely important to them and it is embarrassing.

For the Premier to stand up and say the only way to have those cases resolved is by bringing them into this House and publicly exposing them to that, I think is a point for you to intervene on the appropriateness of that kind of direction from the Premier that says the only way we can get action on behalf of our constituents —

**The Speaker:** No. Although that may be interesting, I don't see it as a lot different than the point of privilege raised by the member for Fort William. I will say again, it is not up to me to determine the responses to the questions or the questions themselves. If that's how you interpreted the Premier's response, then you act accordingly. I can't adjudicate this for you. It would be impossible.

#### NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

**Ms Shelley Martel (Sudbury East):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: the point I would like to raise is that I am dissatisfied with the response I received from the Premier this afternoon and I would request that we debate this at the end of today.

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** If you've file the appropriate notice, that's fine.

#### EDUCATION LEGISLATION

**Mrs Lyn McLeod (Fort William):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I raise this quite seriously as a concern. I don't pretend to know how it can be addressed, but I think it needs to be noted for the record. I sit as a member of the committee that will be going into public hearings on Bill 104, the bill which is about to receive to second reading and which had a time allocation motion passed last Thursday.

I have in front of me some 300 applications from individuals who have asked to present at those hearings. They're part of the 951 names of individuals who want to present at the hearings. As the representative of our caucus on the subcommittee establishing who should present to the hearings, I've been asked to set at least these 300 names of people who have directly contacted my office in some kind of priority for presentation. I don't know how you deal with it, but I just have to raise it as a point of order for the impossibility of the way in which this assembly proceeds to deal with the public.

**Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma):** Point of order, Mr Speaker.

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Same point of order? That's not a point of order. Okay, point of order, member for Algoma.

**Mr Wildman:** With over 950 applicants for presentations before the committee just from Toronto, not even counting the rest of the province, and the amount of time set forward in the time allocation motion, it's completely impossible for us to give those who wish to present a real opportunity to have input into Bill 104. This presents all of us in the assembly with a very difficult problem.

**Mrs Elinor Caplan (Oriele):** Point of order, Mr Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Same point of order? Point of order, member for Oriole.

**Mrs Caplan:** Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. We know the impossible task the members of the subcommittee have, but I'm a member of the committee and I would like to have the opportunity to hear Diane —

**The Speaker:** This is not a point of order.

*Interjection.*

**The Speaker:** Member for Oriole, please. This isn't even —

*Interjection.*

**The Speaker:** Member for Oriole, I'm very patient on points of order. That is purely political. You must accept the fact that I will hear the points of order. I don't want to hear the names of the people —

**Mrs Caplan:** People want to be heard.

**The Speaker:** I'm not debating the point. The fact remains that I know you hear it a lot that it may be a question for question period, but frankly it's not a point of order for this place. The committee is seized with responsibility. Asking me to make any kind of order or rule to compel a committee to hear or not hear or set priority is impossible. I just don't want the responsibility at every single committee. If you have a difficulty with the committee, if you have a difficulty with the time allocation motion, it's a question for the House; it's not a question of order. It was properly put; it was properly passed.



## PETITIONS

### NORTH YORK BRANSON HOSPITAL

**Mr Monte Kwinter (Wilson Heights):** I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the final report of the Metropolitan Toronto District Health Council hospital restructuring committee has recommended that North York Branson Hospital merge with York-Finch hospital; and

"Whereas this recommendation will remove emergency and inpatient services currently provided by North York Branson Hospital, which will seriously jeopardize medical care and the quality of health for the growing population which the hospital serves, many being elderly people who in numerous cases require treatment for life-threatening medical conditions;

"We petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reject the recommendation contained within the final report of the Metropolitan Toronto District Health Council hospital restructuring committee as it pertains to North York Branson Hospital, so that it retains, at minimum, emergency and inpatient services."

I've affixed my signature.

### EDUCATION REFORMS

**Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine):** Today I want to present the first seven pages of pages and pages of petitions coming into my office from parents in the riding of Beaches-Woodbine. This is to the members of the Ontario Legislature:

"We, the undersigned, believe that the education of our children will suffer because the education reforms introduced by the Minister of Education and Training do not reflect:

"(1) The democratic principles that are cherished by our society;

"(2) A true perception of what our classrooms involve and a true assessment of their cost;

"(3) A recognition of the special funding needs in Metro."

I am in complete agreement with these parents and I have affixed my signature to the petition.

1510

### CLASS SIZE

**Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury):** This petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the private member's bill introduced by Rick Bartolucci which promotes smaller class sizes passed second reading; and

"Whereas this bill, called Bill 110, was referred to the social development committee; and

"Whereas we, the stakeholders in education, want the government committee to hear what we have to say about smaller class sizes; and

"Whereas we want to hear what the government committee has to say regarding smaller class sizes; and

"Whereas all people in Ontario have a right to speak to the social development committee about smaller class sizes;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support the recommendation that the social development committee travel across Ontario to find out what the students, parents, teachers and taxpayers of Ontario are saying about smaller class sizes and Bill 110, the smaller class sizes act."

Of course I affix my signature to this petition.

### OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

**Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre):** I have a petition submitted by the Ontario Federation of Labour on behalf of all working people in the province, union and non-union.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Harris government has begun a process to open the Occupational Health and Safety Act of Ontario; and

"Whereas this act is the single most important piece of legislation for working people since it is designed to protect our lives, safety and health while at work and allow us to return home to our families in the same condition in which we left; and

"Whereas the government has made it clear that they intend to water down the act and weaken the rights of workers under the law, including the right to know, the right to participate and especially the right to refuse unsafe work; and

"Whereas this government has already watered down proper training of certified committee members;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario not to alter the Occupational Health and Safety Act or erode the rights of workers any further and ensure strict enforcement of the legislation."

I add my name to theirs in support.

### TRANSITION HOUSE

**Mr Pat Hoy (Essex-Kent):** "Whereas Transition House in Chatham has provided emergency shelter to troubled or abused youth as well as support, counselling and life skills training since 1990, and operating on a five-year budget of \$865,000 they have counselled over 400 youth and served over 20,000 meals; and

"Whereas the city of Chatham and the county of Kent rely on Transition House to meet the needs of its troubled youth and there is no other facility to serve the needs of the community; and

"Whereas the principles of discipline, self-help and a regimented environment at Transition House have combined with counselling and support to provide youth with the motivation and self-respect to return to school or find jobs; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario has cut its direct funding to Transition House by almost \$48,000 annually and placed the existence of Transition House in jeopardy;

"Be it therefore resolved that we, the undersigned, urge the government of Ontario to reverse its decision to cut the funding of Transition House in Chatham."

I affix my name to this.



## OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

**Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre):** I have a petition from the Canadian Auto Workers union. It reads:

"To save the Workers' Health and Safety Centre and the occupational health clinics for Ontario workers.

"To Premier Harris and the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"We, the undersigned, oppose any attempts to erode the structure, services or funding of the Workers' Health and Safety Centre and the occupational health clinics for Ontario workers.

"Therefore, we demand education and training of Ontario workers continue in its present form through the Workers' Health and Safety Centre and that professional and technical expertise and advice continue to be provided through the occupational health clinics for Ontario workers."

I add my name to theirs.

## SENIORS' ISSUES

**Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin):** "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the quality of care for residents of nursing homes and homes for the aged is being directly and adversely affected by the funding policies of the Mike Harris Conservative government;

"Whereas the funding deficiencies are forcing these institutions to reduce available staff assistance to residents to unacceptable levels;

"Whereas the user taxes placed on prescription drugs unfairly discriminate against residents of nursing homes;

"Whereas the residents of these institutions are the very people who built this great province and country;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To provide adequate funding for long-term-care institutions and eliminate the user taxes on prescription drugs for seniors."

This is signed by quite a number of my constituents from the Gore Bay-Kagawong-Mindemoya area.

## FIREARMS CONTROL

**Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre):** I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly that's signed by people from Windsor and London and all over southwestern Ontario.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas violence involving firearms is unacceptably common; and

"Whereas the requirement that firearms be registered as proposed by the federal government is reasonable,

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately withdraw all opposition to the federal gun control legislation.

"Further, we demand that all money that would have been spent to oppose the federal gun control legislation instead be spent on the prevention of domestic violence and on services for victims of domestic violence."

I am pleased to affix my signature.

## MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

**Mr John L. Parker (York East):** I have a petition here signed by five residents of East York. It reads as follows:

"We, the undersigned residents of East York, are in favour of the borough of East York remaining as a separate municipality."

## FIRE SAFETY

**Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury):** This is a petition in response to Bill 84.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the firefighters of Ontario and Sudbury are very concerned about Bill 84;

"Whereas we feel Bill 84 is unfair;

"Whereas we feel Bill 84 is discriminatory;

"Whereas we feel Bill 84 endangers the wellbeing of the people of Ontario;

"Whereas we feel Bill 84 requires extensive changes;

"Whereas we feel Bill 84 needs broad provincial public hearings before implementation; and

"Whereas we are very concerned about Bill 84 and don't want to get burned by Bill 84,

"We, the undersigned, therefore petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to demand the Solicitor General to rewrite Bill 84 before being enacted into law and only after extensive public hearings across Ontario."

I affix my signature to this petition.

## OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

**Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre):** I have petitions from my community of Hamilton.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the tragic deaths of two workers at Dofasco's bayfront steel mill in Hamilton raise serious questions about safety procedures; and

"Whereas the representatives of the workers, the United Steelworkers of America, were stonewalled and shut out of the early stages of the investigation; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris Conservatives have abolished the Workplace Health and Safety Agency and laid off the agency's staff of safety training experts; and

"Whereas the Harris government has reduced the requirements for workplace health and safety training; and

"Whereas the Conservative government is considering changes to the role of the joint health and safety commission and to the right to refuse unsafe work which could lead to even more workplace accidents in the future; and

"Whereas deregulating workplace health and safety will lead to more deaths and injuries,

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to demand a coroner's inquest into the fatal accident at Dofasco, along with a complete investigation including full participation by the representatives of the workers."

I add my name to theirs in support.

## FIRE SAFETY

**Mr Frank Miclash (Kenora):** I have a petition in response to Bill 84 and it reads:



"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the firefighters of Kenora and Ontario are very concerned about Bill 84;

"Whereas we feel Bill 84 is unfair;

"Whereas we feel Bill 84 is discriminatory;

"Whereas we feel Bill 84 endangers the wellbeing of the people of Ontario;

"Whereas we feel Bill 84 requires extensive changes;

"Whereas we feel Bill 84 needs broad provincial public hearings before implementation;

"Whereas we are concerned about Bill 84,

"We, the undersigned, therefore petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to demand the Solicitor General to rewrite Bill 84 before being enacted into law and after extensive public hearings across Ontario."

I have attached my name to that petition as well.

#### LIQUOR CONTROL BOARD OF ONTARIO

**Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury):** "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario is considering the privatization of the Liquor Control Board of Ontario,

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Liquor Control Board of Ontario remain a crown corporation because we fear that the privatization of that organization will lead to increases in crime, drunk driving, alcohol abuse and its health costs as well as a loss of control over availability to minors and quality of product."

I affix my signature to this petition.

#### HOSPITAL RESTRUCTURING

**Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines):** I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the Conservative government of Mike Harris has closed three out of five hospitals in Thunder Bay and two out of three hospitals in Sudbury; and

"Whereas drastic funding cuts to hospitals across Ontario are intimidating hospital boards, district health councils and local hospital restructuring commissions into considering the closing of local hospitals; and

"Whereas hospitals in the Niagara region have provided an outstanding essential service to patients and have been important facilities for medical staff to treat the residents of the Niagara Peninsula and will be required for people in Niagara for years to come; and

"Whereas the population of Niagara is on average older than that in most areas of the province;

"We, the undersigned, call upon the Minister of Health to restore adequate funding to hospitals in the Niagara region and guarantee that his government will not close any hospitals in the Niagara Peninsula."

I affix my signature, as I'm in full agreement with this petition.

#### VIDEO LOTTERY TERMINALS

**Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands):** I have a very important petition here addressed to the government of Ontario.

"Since video lottery terminals will contribute to gambling addiction in Ontario and the resulting breakup of families, spousal and child abuse and crimes such as embezzlement and robbery; and

"Since the introduction of video lottery terminals across Ontario will provide those addicted to gambling with widespread temptation and will attract young people to a vice which will adversely affect their lives for so many years to come; and

"Since the introduction of these gambling machines across our province is designed to gain revenue for the government at the expense of the poor, the vulnerable and the desperate in order that the government can cut income taxes, to the greatest benefit of those with the highest income; and

"Since the placement of video lottery terminals in bars in Ontario and in permanent casinos in various locations across the province represents an escalation of gambling opportunities; and

"Since Premier Harris and Finance Minister Eves were so critical of the provincial government becoming involved in further gambling ventures and making the government more dependent on gambling revenues to maintain government operations;

"We, the undersigned, call upon Premier Harris and the government of Ontario to reconsider its announced decision to introduce the most insidious form of gambling, video lottery terminals, to restaurants and bars in the province."

I've affixed my signature to it.

#### MANDATORY INQUESTS

**Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury):** This petition comes from Local 6,500 of the United Steelworkers of America.

"To the Honourable Solicitor General and the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Progressive Conservative government of Ontario has decided to scrap mandatory inquests as a result of fatalities in the mining and construction industries; and

"Whereas this unprecedented and callous decision sets workplace safety back 20 years;

"We, the undersigned, request that Solicitor General Bob Runciman, on behalf of all workers in the mining and construction industries, reverse his decision to remove mandatory inquests from the Coroners Act of Ontario."

Of course I affix my signature to this petition.

#### REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

##### STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

**Mr Frank Miclash (Kenora):** I beg leave to present the 32nd report of the standing committee on government agencies.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley):** Does the member wish to make a brief statement?

**Mr Miclash:** This is the report where David Cooke, the former NDP member, was appointed to the Education Improvement Commission.



**The Acting Speaker:** Pursuant to standing order 106(g)(11), the report is deemed to be adopted by the House.

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

### FEWER SCHOOL BOARDS ACT, 1997 LOI DE 1997 RÉDUISANT LE NOMBRE DE CONSEILS SCOLAIRES

Resuming the adjourned debate on the motion for second reading of Bill 104, An Act to improve the accountability, effectiveness and quality of Ontario's school system by permitting a reduction in the number of school boards, establishing an Education Improvement Commission to oversee the transition to the new system, providing for certain matters related to elections in 1997 and making other improvements to the Education Act and the Municipal Elections Act, 1996 / *Projet de loi 104, Loi de 1997 visant à accroître l'obligation de rendre compte, l'efficacité et la qualité du système scolaire ontarien en permettant la réduction du nombre des conseils scolaires, en créant la Commission d'amélioration de l'éducation, chargée d'encadrer la transition vers le nouveau système, en prévoyant certaines questions liées aux élections de 1997 et en apportant d'autres améliorations à la Loi sur l'éducation et à la Loi de 1996 sur les élections municipales.*

**The Acting Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley):** Pursuant to the order of the House, I must now put the question. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, please say "aye."

Those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. A five-minute bell.

*The division bells rang from 1525 to 1530.*

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Mr Snobelen has moved second reading of Bill 104.

All those in favour, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

#### Ayes

Arnott, Ted	Grimmett, Bill	Palladini, Al
Baird, John R.	Guzzo, Garry J.	Parker, John L.
Barrett, Toby	Hardeman, Ernie	Pettit, Trevor
Bassett, Isabel	Harnick, Charles	Preston, Peter
Beaubien, Marcel	Harris, Michael D.	Rollins, E.J. Douglas
Boushy, Dave	Hastings, John	Ross, Lillian
Brown, Jim	Hodgson, Chris	Runciman, Robert W.
Carroll, Jack	Hudak, Tim	Sampson, Rob
Chudleigh, Ted	Jackson, Cameron	Saunderson, William
Clement, Tony	Johnson, Bert	Shea, Derwyn
Cunningham, Dianne	Johnson, David	Sheehan, Frank
Danford, Harry	Johnson, Ron	Smith, Bruce
DeFaria, Carl	Jordan, W. Leo	Snobelen, John
Doyle, Ed	Kells, Morley	Sterling, Norman W.
Ecker, Janet	Leach, Al	Stewart, R. Gary
Elliott, Brenda	Marland, Margaret	Tilson, David
Eves, Ernie L.	Martiniuk, Gerry	Tsubouchi, David H.
Fisher, Barbara	Maves, Bart	Turnbull, David
Flaherty, Jim	McLean, Allan K.	Villeneuve, Noble

Ford, Douglas B.  
Fox, Gary  
Froese, Tom  
Galt, Doug

Munro, Julia  
Mushinski, Marilyn  
Newman, Dan  
O'Toole, John

Wettlaufer, Wayne  
Wood, Bob  
Young, Terence H.

## The Speaker: Those opposed?

#### Nays

Bartolucci, Rick  
Bisson, Gilles  
Boyd, Marion  
Bradley, James J.  
Brown, Michael A.  
Caplan, Elinor  
Churley, Marilyn  
Cleary, John C.  
Colle, Mike  
Conway, Sean G.

Cordiano, Joseph  
Crozier, Bruce  
Curling, Alvin  
Duncan, Dwight  
Gerretsen, John  
Hoy, Pat  
Kennedy, Gerard  
Kwinter, Monte  
Lankin, Frances  
Marchese, Rosario

Martin, Tony  
McGuinty, Dalton  
McLeod, Lyn  
Miclash, Frank  
Morin, Gilles E.  
Patten, Richard  
Pupatello, Sandra  
Ramsay, David  
Wildman, Bud  
Wood, Len

**Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers):** The ayes are 68; the nays are 30.

**The Speaker:** I declare the motion carried.

Pursuant to the order of the House dated February 6, 1997, the bill is referred to the standing committee on social development.

### STREAMLINING OF ADMINISTRATION OF PROVINCIAL OFFENCES ACT, 1997

#### LOI DE 1997 SIMPLIFIANT L'ADMINISTRATION EN CE QUI A TRAIT AUX INFRACTIONS PROVINCIALES

Mr Harnick moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 108, An Act to deal with the prosecution of certain provincial offences, to reduce duplication and to streamline administration / *Projet de loi 108, Loi traitant des poursuites concernant certaines infractions provinciales, réduisant le double emploi et simplifiant l'administration.*

**Hon Charles Harnick (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs):** It's my pleasure to introduce for second reading Bill 108, which amends the Provincial Offences Act to enable the transfer of all the remaining administrative and some prosecutorial functions for ticketable offences and fines to municipalities.

The proposed amendments, which are subject to the approval of this Legislature, build on the successful transfer of parking tickets to municipalities four years ago. Today 95% —

#### Interjections.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley):** Will the minister take his seat just for a moment. Could I have order, please. I can't hear the Attorney General. If you want to meet, please go outside. Attorney General.

**Hon Mr Harnick:** Today 95% of parking tickets are handled by municipalities. This experience has shown that service can be provided to the public at a lower cost and that there are a number of benefits to be gained by involving municipalities more directly in the administration of justice.

We are now taking the next logical step. Bill 108 continues to move matters with local impact into the



control and the accountability of the local authorities. It does so with the full appreciation of the need for consistent provincial standards for the administration of justice.

Bill 108 eliminates waste and duplication as administrative functions are brought together under one level of government. For example, administrative processes are duplicated when two offices process a single certificate of offence. With our changes, only the municipal office would process the certificate.

As well, Bill 108 provides for participating municipalities to retain the net revenues from fines collected under the Provincial Offences Act. We estimate that up to \$65 million in revenue could accrue to Ontario municipalities. This new source of revenue could be spent on improving local services even after the costs of the new responsibilities are taken into account.

Fine revenues would continue to be subject to the victim fine surcharge. These moneys would be sent to the victims justice fund which was established by this government to assist victims of crime. Partner municipalities would retain the balance of fines after the victim fine surcharge and other program costs are remitted to the province.

The responsibilities to be transferred to municipalities under Bill 108 include administration of parts I, II and III of the Provincial Offences Act and prosecution of part I or minor ticketable offences. Approximately 80% of these part I offences are issued under the Highway Traffic Act. These infractions include speeding up to 49 kilometres over the speed limit, failing to stop at a red light or stop sign and failure to wear a seatbelt. Examples of other part I offences include minor Liquor Licence Act infractions such as an open bottle of liquor and being intoxicated in a public place, as well as ticket scalping under the Ticket Speculation Act.

The province will continue to prosecute part III offences, which are often more complex and can result in jail sentences. The province will also continue to be responsible for setting and monitoring standards for the administration of justice in order to ensure a uniform, fair and equal justice across Ontario. Provincially appointed judges and justices of the peace will continue to decide Provincial Offences Act cases. The province proposes to invite municipalities to submit proposals for partnership. Municipalities interested in the invitation to participate in the transfer would be expected to meet specific selection criteria and once selected would sign a memorandum of understanding. This agreement would set out clearly the respective roles of the Attorney General and the participating municipalities.

We are aware that some municipalities may be too small to take over provincial offences on their own. We anticipate, in fact we know from preliminary discussions with municipalities, that municipalities may choose to get together and serve traditional court catchment areas or other reasonable concentrations of population. The ministry is encouraging this cooperation and the bill allows for that.

We anticipate there could be approximately 75 municipal partnerships from the Provincial Offences Act transfer. Subject to the approval of this Legislature, the

transfer of responsibilities would start this year and be completed over the next two years.

In developing these amendments, we had the benefit of input from many legal and municipal experts. Productive consultations with internal and external stakeholders, the judiciary, the bar and the municipal sector took place and will continue. As well, on the recommendation of the Crombie subpanel, the ministry has worked closely with representatives of seven municipalities from different areas of the province to get their views on issues related to the proposed transfer.

1540

This initiative was supported by David Crombie's Who Does What panel and has been welcomed by municipalities. They are eager to take on responsibility for local justice and anticipate the local benefit of an increase in revenue from the transfer. I can tell you that I have had very productive discussions, for instance, with the mayor of Windsor, the mayor of London, the mayor of Kingston, council members from Owen Sound and the warden of Grey county, and they're all very excited about this opportunity.

In 1979, Ontario was the first to decriminalize regulatory offences by introducing the more efficient ticketing system of the Provincial Offences Act. Other provinces such as Alberta, New Brunswick, Newfoundland and British Columbia have adopted similar legislation. In 1993, Bill 25 successfully streamlined the Provincial Offences Act process by transferring the responsibility to administer parking infractions to designated municipalities. Once again in 1997, Ontario will set an example by inviting municipalities to be partners in the justice system.

I ask the House to approve the bill in principle and look forward to participating in further debate.

**The Acting Speaker:** Questions or comments?

**Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands):** Let me first of all say that this looks like one of those bills that everyone could be in favour of. It looks like one of those bills. We have to keep in mind that this is another one of those downloading exercises on to the local municipalities. I'm sure the people of this province are getting quite weary about the whole situation, especially since it has now been confirmed by a senior official within the Ministry of Finance that it's going to cost municipalities \$1 billion more with respect to all of these downloading exercises than what was originally talked about. This is exactly the kind of thing that independent studies of most municipalities have shown: that their taxes are going to go up if they want to continue to provide the same kind of services to the municipalities.

The other thing that's very interesting is that the government claims this initiative will generate something like \$65 million to municipalities. It's interesting that in the Crombie report, he only estimated a \$30-million generation of revenues to the municipalities of Ontario. There's quite a difference there. I think it's these kinds of differences that would lead one to be very suspicious about this kind of legislation. There's nothing in the legislation at all that would allow a municipality to opt out after they've opted in, because in their particular situation, as the Attorney General has already stated,



there may not be the same financial savings as there may be in other municipalities. There's nothing in this legislation at all that talks about making sure there is some sort of uniform standard with respect to how this act is going to be applied across the province.

We look forward to the discussions that we'll be having on this bill and to the public participation. We've got many questions about this bill, however.

**Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre):** It is good that we are discussing this act this afternoon, because of course the government is putting a great deal of emphasis on the possibility for the municipalities to gain part of their revenue from this bill, and it's amazing that in the flurry of activity around the downloading of provincial responsibilities to municipalities the Attorney General would try to indicate anything else.

The other thing that struck me in his speech was his claim that his government set up the victim assistance fund. He knows that's not the case, that the name of the fund was changed by the act passed by the current government but that in fact that fund was set up under the previous government and was part of the entire plan to ensure that victim services were funded by those who offend against both the criminal law and the provincial offences. So it's important for us to recognize both of those things.

I'm glad we're going to have an opportunity to talk about the effects, both good and bad, as we go through this debate, of this particular act. But I think it is fair to say that we would have had a much more fruitful discussion had we had some sort of notion what the selection criteria for the agreements between municipalities and the provincial government are going to be. It is very difficult to talk in the absence of those selection criteria because it is difficult for any of us to know what exactly we are talking about. Again, as is usual with this government, we are being asked to buy a pig in a poke. We do not know what the details are going to be, and the devil is in the detail.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you. The member's time has expired. Further questions or comments?

**Mr David Tilson (Dufferin-Peel):** The minister has referred to a number of areas as to why we're getting into this legislation, why this legislation is coming forward. Really, if you look at the overall plan as to where our government has been taking us, the purpose of it of course is to reduce duplication, to eliminate delays. We believe with this type of legislation and the municipalities handling these smaller, minor types of offences that more time can be spent on the more serious types of offences, that there will be fewer delays and that this is a plan that will help substantially reduce those delays that have been occurring with the more serious types of offences.

There is no question that there has been duplication that has gone on with the process we currently have. In fact the process the member for Kingston and The Islands talked about — he didn't say too much in favour of it, but actually this whole process of transferring the prosecuting of ticket offences started, I believe, with your government. I could be mistaken, but I feel it was your government that started that process.

**Mr Gerretsen:** Let's talk about the future, not the past.

**Mr Tilson:** Well, we are talking about the future. That's what we're trying to get away from, your doing. We believe this is the future. We have to solve these problems. There has been duplication. There has been waste. That's exactly what this legislation is doing. The legislation is to eliminate that.

The minister referred to the member for Kingston and The Islands, saying the mayor of Kingston — I can tell you that in my own riding of Dufferin-Peel the municipalities are speaking in favour of this legislation. They want it, they believe they can service it, and they think they are going to be able to do it in a more efficient manner to allow the province to carry on in prosecuting the more serious crimes of this province. I hope all of this will be a unanimous support of this legislation.

**Mr Len Wood (Cochrane North):** I listened to the comments from the Attorney General on the dumping of the enforcing of offences on the region. This is a system that might work well in the cities, but I don't know, for example, in Kapuskasing and Hearst and all these municipalities, where a bylaw enforcement officer is going to be expected to go out and chase speeders who are speeding throughout the town. He used the example of in Windsor the mayor is happy. But all the small towns that couldn't afford their own police service in the communities have turned over the services to OPP and now we're not going to have anybody in these communities. If the OPP is not going to enforce the laws, there is not going to be anybody in these communities who is going to be able to enforce the liquor offences and, as I said, speeding.

The municipalities, from what I can gather — I was over at ROMA and they're saying: "Why are all these services being dumped on to the municipalities? Why are all the municipalities being told they should eliminate all their mayors and reeves and go to supercities in northern Ontario the same as they have in Toronto?" This is a trend that is happening, where people throughout north-eastern Ontario are saying: "What's going to be left? Are there only going to be the cities of North Bay, Sudbury, Thunder Bay and Timmins, and all the other small municipalities are not going to be left with names, with municipal councillors or mayors or reeves? They'll just be forgotten in the mind of Mike Harris."

The Attorney General has enforced that once more today, that the municipalities are going to have to look after all the minor offences. They can't do it. They're just being dumped on day after day after day. Megacity and mega-week, it's just one after the other: Dump, dump, dump on to the small municipalities.

1550

**The Acting Speaker (Mr Ed Doyle):** Minister?

**Hon Mr Harnick:** I just want to read a letter that I received from the mayor of Kingston, Gary Bennett. Here's what he says:

"You requested municipalities within the Kingston and Napanee area to consider submitting proposals to your ministry to become partners in the Provincial Offences Act. This was very good news for our community, and the city of Kingston is prepared to become a partner with your ministry immediately.



"I appreciated your support of the city of Kingston's interest in this program and I have asked my staff to begin the process of communication with your ministry staff."

I also met with the mayor of London and —

**Mr Gerretsen:** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Would you also read the letter where he's complaining about the \$23 million that he figures it's going to cost?

**The Acting Speaker:** That is not a point of order. Minister.

**Hon Mr Harnick:** The mayor of London also said that because this particular bill would provide extra money to London, "It will allow us the opportunity to get more police officers on the street and hence greater driver safety and greater safety in general."

I think this is a very good opportunity for municipalities. It gets rid of duplication. It gets rid of confusion in the mind of the public. It provides more money for municipal taxpayers, who then can find better services from their municipality.

We're going to enter into memorandums of agreement with communities all over the province. Those memorandums will be set up in a way that we can maintain the existing standard of high-quality justice in the province.

This is a very good bill for municipalities. I have spoken to members of municipal councils all over the province. Every one of them wants this bill passed, they want it passed quickly, and I hope the opposition will accommodate the municipalities that they also represent.

**Mr Gerretsen:** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I don't believe we have a quorum. Since the critic for our party is going to give the leadoff speech on this in a moment, I'm sure that more government members would want to hear her —

**The Acting Speaker:** We'll check for a quorum. Thank you.

**Clerk Assistant and Clerk of Committees (Ms Deborah Deller):** A quorum is not present, Speaker.

*The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.*

**Clerk Assistant and Clerk of Committees:** A quorum is now present, Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** Further debate?

**Ms Annamarie Castrilli (Downsview):** This bill is indeed a very important bill. It comes on the heels of a flurry of bills and legislative activity that we've seen in the last little while. Nevertheless, it remains an important piece of legislation not only because of its content but because of the framework in which it sits.

The stated intent of the bill is very clear on its face. It's An Act to deal with the prosecution of certain provincial offences, to reduce duplication and to streamline administration. Quite frankly, all of those are very worthwhile goals, and none of us on either side of the House can disagree in principle.

The interests of the justice system and the interests of the public are well served by looking for opportunities always to streamline the system, to make it more efficient, to make it more accessible, to make it more transparent. The people who elected us on both sides of the House expect that of us, and so it's with that in mind that we should be looking at this bill and coming to conclusions.

I'd like us to consider some questions this afternoon with respect to this particular piece of legislation, and I'd like to put them to you first so you have time to consider them as we go through.

The first really deals with, does the bill achieve its stated purposes, which I read at the beginning? If it does, all well and good; if it doesn't, we'll have to think about change.

Does the bill project and fit into a general justice framework? I think that's a very important question for us to consider.

The third question I'd like to pose today is, what does this bill say with respect to governance and to the appropriate powers that levels of government ought to have? This bill speaks to us about sharing responsibilities, about transferring responsibilities between one level of government and another, and I think we have to ask that question, particularly since this is a justice bill and it is incumbent upon us to ensure we have the best system possible.

The bill, as members will recall, is really the result of recommendations made by the Crombie commission, the Who Does What commission or, as some people have called it, the who does what to whom commission, but certainly that wouldn't be something I would say. You will recall that in the report there are two references made to the Provincial Offences Act and how they might be dealt with. The first is a letter from Mr Crombie to the Minister of Municipal Affairs dated August 14, 1996, which introduces the subject. Then later on, on December 20 of the same year, he becomes a little more specific about what should be done with respect to provincial offences, in his view and in the view of his co-chair for that particular area.

The proposal, as you will recall, was to move the administration of various provincial offences to municipalities, to streamline the justice system and to provide a net source of revenues for municipalities into the bargain. It was to be a quid pro quo: The province would no longer be involved in the administration and prosecution of certain offences, but in return, the revenues generated by the fines that those offences carry would go to municipalities.

At the same time, though, the proposals were as follows: There was first of all an indication that part I, II and III offences under the Provincial Offences Act — mainly, for those of you unfamiliar with the act, offences having to do with traffic violations, with the Highway Traffic Act, with parking fines and liquor licensing offences of one sort or another — would be transferred to municipalities to administer.

Crombie also recommended that the implementation be phased in; that it wasn't something that was going to happen overnight but that the transfer would happen in some sort of phased fashion. There would be a memorandum of understanding that would be entered into between the municipality and the province, the idea being that you wanted a willing partner in this particular area and that those municipalities that did not feel they wanted to participate would not be compelled to participate.

Another point in the Crombie report was that there must be an open, clear and transparent process to ensure



that the justice system was well served and that the people of Ontario had confidence in the system as it was evolving, which in fact it is; it's an evolution from the province to the municipalities.

There would be revenue-sharing; in other words, there should be some compensation to the municipalities for taking on all this work. The compensation Crombie estimated to be a net figure of somewhere between \$30 million and \$40 million, with \$30 million being a conservative estimate, no pun intended.

That figure was the result of whatever fines were levied minus the costs of the municipal administration, any adjudication and prosecutorial costs, and 15% which would be levied and paid into the victim surcharge fund. All of those would be deducted. That's a fair compromise because those are costs that would have been paid in any event and should be recovered. Those, in substance, were the recommendations of the Crombie report and it was pursuant to that report that we now have Bill 108.

1600

Just to set a bit of background for those of us who are not as familiar with Bill 108, or indeed with the justice system, the Provincial Offences Act deals with offences which are under the jurisdiction of the province and any regulations that are made by the province pursuant to any act of the Legislature. The types of offences that are covered, as I indicated, are typically the Highway Traffic Act, parking violations, liquor licensing. They're offences of a minor nature; they can be of a more serious nature but largely they're of a minor nature and they're handled summarily.

Constitutionally, the jurisdiction for the administration of justice resides with the province and so the transfer to the municipality is in a sense a delegation of that constitutional right which the province would otherwise have.

Bill 108 amends the Provincial Offences Act in a number of ways. The most significant one is that it adds a new part X. Part X allows the province to enter into agreements with consenting municipalities to allow such municipalities to step into the shoes of the province, because we have that delegation from the province to the municipality, and the municipality in question would have, more or less, all the same powers of the province to administer and prosecute those provincial offences and to levy the fines that accrue.

It's true that some municipalities already prosecute some offences. This is not a novel departure. In fact it does occur, and some might argue that it builds on that precedent. In particular, some municipalities are now prosecuting parking infractions and dealing with them under part II of the Provincial Offences Act.

What this bill proposes to do is to transfer to municipalities the ability to provide a full range of administration, prosecution and court support for what are normally known as ticketable offences, and part II offences which are normally parking offences, as well as administration for part III offences which are offences that require a court appearance or where there is no set fine and therefore you require a court appearance, leaving, in that case, the prosecution to the province. You've got in some cases a wholesale delegation, whereas in part III offences

where there are no set fines the prosecution remains in the province.

The substantive sections I think speak largely for themselves. Section 165 speaks very clearly about the agreements and what the agreements will apply to, and as I have indicated, it's parts I, II and III offences and how they will be delegated and the extent to which they are delegated. Also it applies to regulations that may be made.

Some of the interesting provisions come a little later on under part X, and principally subsection 165(5). The act reads:

"(5) The municipality shall pay to the Minister of Finance, at the times and in the manner specified in the agreement, amounts calculated in accordance with the agreement, in respect of,

"(a) surcharges under section 60.1;

"(b) other fine revenues that constitute money paid to Ontario for a special purpose within the meaning of the Financial Administration Act;

"(c) costs the Attorney General incurs for adjudication and prosecution, for monitoring the performance of the agreement and for enforcing the agreement; and

"(d) fines and fees imposed under the Contraventions Act (Canada)."

The municipalities may therefore enter into agreements, not being compelled — and I think it's a very positive sign that municipalities ought to be able to make up their own minds as to whether this is good for them or not. That would allow some flexibility, because it may be that in some municipalities there may be more of an interest than in other municipalities, perhaps in some of the smaller municipalities where they might not have the staff, they might not have the expertise, they might not have the desire to take this on as an item.

But it's not clear at this time how a municipality is to make an informed decision on the basis of this bill. Assuming that we are in favour of having such agreements, there's no information, for instance, that has been given by the government on how much income will in fact be generated. We have what Crombie indicates as a figure between \$30 million and \$40 million. We've heard some wild number of \$65 million, but there has really been no hard data provided, and I think municipalities will require some of that information in order to be able to make some informed decision.

There's no indication whether the startup costs have been factored in to any of these amounts. You remember that I talked about the fact that whatever moneys the municipalities get are net of costs, but those costs do not include startup costs and they do not include what training may be necessary for personnel, for instance. So again it will be difficult for municipalities to make an informed judgement, given the fact that they don't have hard data to be able to make what is essentially a financial decision for them.

There has really no indication or any evidence presented to us so far that eliminating one provincial system of prosecutions and allowing the proliferation of many systems of prosecution across the province will be more efficient and cost-effective. Perhaps it will be, but there is no evidence to that effect, and common sense would



tell us that if you are going to duplicate systems, then surely that is going to entail additional costs. This is something that again is incumbent on the government to show to us and to municipalities to ensure that we have not only a better justice system but a more cost-efficient system.

In short, municipalities are going to require more detailed information than what they have been given so far. In principle it sounds like a good proposal, but municipalities are creatures that have to deal with budgets, they are creatures that have to deal with finances, they are creatures that have to respond to the taxpayer. Therefore, they're going to need those hard financial data in order to be able to make any kind of judgement, or else what we will have is not many municipalities taking up the challenge that the government is throwing out today.

There is also nothing in the legislation which permits a municipality to terminate an agreement if it turns out that the agreement is not of advantage to the municipality. Remember, there's quid pro quo here. They take on the administration and prosecution of certain offences, and in return they are entitled to make a profit. What happens if they don't? Does the collective agreement bind them? For how long?

These are questions that there must be some answers to, and I raise them simply to be helpful, not to scuttle the bill or to say that it's a bill that is not worth supporting in principle. But there are too many unanswered questions as this bill stands, and there's nothing that has come from the Attorney General that could give any comfort to municipalities who were contemplating this agreement in the first place. So I would say to the government members, produce more information, more factual data than you have to date if you want the program to be a success.

1610

Mike Harris, you know, is very fond of saying that there is only one taxpayer, and that's true. I think we all agree with that. At the end of the day, what we don't want is that taxpayer to have to foot a higher bill municipally. That isn't, I hope, the intent of this bill, so I urge you to consider that this aspect is extremely important, to make sure that it is cost-efficient and that it lives up to its stated purpose.

There are some other portions of the bill which I think bear repeating because they're a little more specific than what I've read so far. For instance, the municipalities will be required to live up to certain performance standards which will be spelled out in the agreement. I think that's all to the good, because if you want a system of justice that is clear and transparent, then surely those performance standards must be put in. The municipalities would be subject to sanctions, again to be spelled out in the agreement, if they failed to live up to those standards. That, in the public interest, is a very good measure.

Under subsection 165(1), when an agreement is in force, the municipality has the power to collect fines and surcharges and fees and to enforce their payments. However, the legislation also specifies that the victim fine surcharge must be the first money when a fine is recovered, to ensure that this program is protected. That

is a good measure, because we want to make sure that program is protected. There is an interest on all of us to make sure that victims are protected from wrongdoing.

The municipality must also pay over to the province other amounts collected for a special purpose, as well as costs the province incurs for adjudication and prosecution of charges, as well as for monitoring and enforcement of the agreement itself. The municipality may then retain the balance as a fee — that's pursuant to subsection 165(6) — but municipalities will not have the power to arrest or detain people who default in paying fines, which is a considerable loophole in this legislation which I expect the government will want to have a look at. What happens if people do not pay their fines?

These agreements may be retroactive once the municipality and the province have entered into them, so the municipalities may enforce the payment of fines before the agreement went into place, and the agreement applies to a proceeding whether commenced before or after the effective date of the agreement. However, it will not apply to a proceeding if the trial is to begin within seven days after the effective date or if the trial began before the effective date and disposition is not yet complete on the effective date. That too is understandable, because if you have a proceeding that's ongoing, it seems more appropriate to let it follow through under the existing rules than to apply new rules and start all over again.

The court clerks in each case may be employees of the municipalities and the trials may be in a location designated by the municipality, but it need not be in premises operated by the province. I imagine that's to allow for as much flexibility as possible.

Under section 168, we find that nothing in the bill interferes with the Attorney General's right to intervene in a proceeding and to assume the role of prosecutor at any stage. That to me implies something less than a full delegation, and to the government I would say, be very specific about the circumstances in which you are prepared to delegate outright and the areas in which you are not prepared to delegate outright. What you do not want to do is create confusion in the mind of the public about who is going to have charge of a particular proceeding at any given time.

It is also interesting to note that while there is a delegation of sorts to the municipality, the act says very clearly that the municipality at no time acts as an agent of the crown. It's not to be seen as an agency; it's very much in the way of a delegation.

There's one final section I'd like to focus on with respect to this particular bill, and that is what happens when a municipality is in violation of any section of the agreement. The Attorney General at that point can make an order directing compliance, and if the municipality does not comply with the order within whatever time the Attorney General specifies, the Attorney General has the power to revoke or suspend the agreement. But remember that the municipality, according to the bill as currently drafted, has no power to get out of the agreement if it finds that it's a bad agreement. There are unilateral powers, privileges, in the Attorney General which are not given to municipalities if they should find, for instance, that this agreement is not profitable for them or it's too



cumbersome or they lack the expertise or it's not something their constituents want. They have no choice but to stay locked into it.

I would say to the members of the government that for an agreement to be fair, there must be some quid pro quo, and if there are provisions that allow for the Attorney General to step in and terminate it, at the very least you might look at circumstances under which a municipality might have the right to terminate and call it quits without penalty to itself and its constituents.

One of the bigger issues in this bill, though, as important as the individual sections are and what they tell us about the justice system, is the issue of governance. At some point, and I think this legislation is a perfect time to do it, we have to ask ourselves, how do we decide which level of government is best suited to administer which powers? I confess I've been at a loss as I've watched the Conservative government proceed through the last months, because I'm not sure that's a question you've posed to yourselves, particularly in the last few weeks as we've seen a lot of legislation come forward which has unilaterally dumped — for lack of a better word — services and responsibilities on another level of government. I've been in a quandary to understand the rationale behind that, to understand the philosophy that would motivate you, to understand what legislative good you think that has achieved.

All this mega-week discussion — and Bill 108, unfortunately or fortunately for it, falls very much into that discussion — cries out for a serious discussion of the subject. That gives even more importance to this bill, because it is a bill not only about justice and a system of justice that must be fair and transparent; it's about a system of government that must be fair and transparent.

We have seen over the last while a spate of legislation that has focused on downloading on to unsuspecting municipalities, may I say, responsibilities for all manner of things. It's really quite mind-boggling when you read the list: community police financing, the integration of farm tax rebate and other rebates to local taxes, property assessment services, social housing, municipal transit, GO Transit services, community libraries, community public health, community ambulance services, homes for special care, community ferries, municipal airport services, fire services, and sewers and water inspections. These are all to be fully downloaded on to municipalities, while another number are to be funded 50% by municipalities: social assistance, child care, long-term care.

1620

It's hard to understand the rationale for downloading all these services. What do they have in common? Why are they being transferred to the municipalities? These are questions that, unfortunately, we have not asked before and certainly, if we have, have not been given any satisfactory answers to.

The cost to municipalities of all this is something in excess of \$1 billion. Every expert who has had a crack at these things has said it's going to cost at least \$1 billion to municipalities, moneys they haven't got right now, that they have to raise in some way.

That doesn't even begin to factor in, however, the cost of starting up taking over any of these services and the

hiring and training of personnel, points I've also made with respect to Bill 108. Bill 108 is a striking example of the additional costs there are going to be that have not been factored in. Municipalities do not have the legal staff, sometimes they do not have the premises, and they certainly do not have the training, the capacity to be able, uniformly, to take on the kinds of things the government may be asking them to do. While it may be tempting for them to try and enter into agreements, the reality is that to enter into those agreements is going to be extremely costly. I see nothing in this legislation to address that, as I see nothing in the legislation you have presented over the last few weeks to address the very serious concerns of municipalities.

People everywhere in Ontario are beginning to understand that they are going to be intimately affected. There are meetings every night of the week all over Ontario where people start to understand that their taxes are going to go up and their services are going to go down. More specifically than that, "services" doesn't mean very much, but to the average citizen the fact that his garbage pickup may be detained, the fact that his or her snow removal isn't going to happen are very serious concerns.

I would urge the government members to consider the very real effects on all our constituents. We live in an Ontario that has enjoyed a certain quality of life for a very long period of time. Your constituents, just as mine do, like to have their garbage picked up, like to have their streets plowed, like to be able to get out in the morning to get to work without having their driveway all full of snow. They like to make sure they're not paying exorbitant taxes for their homes. They want the kind of quality of life, of education, of health care that have made this province a beacon for so many, that has made it, really, a hallmark of all that is good.

But as people realize — and you all know that. You've been attending these meetings. You know how incensed people are becoming about the downloading on municipalities of all kinds of things, and they are starting to understand about the very real effects on each one of them.

I think it bears repeating what Mike Harris is so very fond of saying, that there's only one taxpayer. That one taxpayer is not going to take very much more. They are going to be very much out-of-pocket and increasingly angry even in your riding.

**Hon Chris Hodgson (Minister of Natural Resources, Northern Development and Mines):** I'll compare our tax-cutting record to yours any day.

**Ms Castrilli:** Tax cutting uniformly I suppose would be a good idea, but tax cutting for one segment of society is never a good idea. That's called class warfare.

*Interjection.*

**Ms Castrilli:** Well, speaker after speaker at the public hearings has come forward and said they've looked at the proposals this government has put forward, in a whole different range of issues, and have found them wanting. They're experts and they're ordinary people; they're Conservatives and they're Liberals and they're people with no political affiliations. The unanimous consensus in the hearings is that. You know very well that even friends of the government are deploring the downloading that is



occurring on to municipalities. I don't see how you can say otherwise.

Look at the facts. Just look at what the impact is going to be on some of our cities. We've heard about Toronto and its \$378 million, but there are centres all across this province that are going to be in some difficulty with respect to funds they have to come up with: the city of Kingston, \$23 million; the city of Brantford, \$18 million; the city of Thunder Bay, \$15 million —

**Interjection:** The city of Kingston likes it.

**Ms Castrilli:** The city of Kingston may like it until they factor the cost, but these are their figures.

— the city of Peterborough, \$13 million; the region of Sudbury, \$105 million; the region of Hamilton-Wentworth, \$121 million; the region of Niagara, \$43 million; the region of Haldimand-Norfolk, \$29 million; the region of Ottawa-Carleton, \$120 million to \$160 million; Prescott-Russell county, \$23 million.

These aren't figures that the opposition made up; these are figures that were prepared by financial officers of their particular area, their particular jurisdiction. They are figures that are credible, and they may in the end far exceed \$1 billion because they do not include the full cost of service transfers which the province by its own admission has not yet determined: the cost of maintaining and repairing, for instance, some 4,000 kilometres of provincial highways — that's not factored into that \$1 billion — the cost of repairing 84,000 rundown social housing units. In my riding of Downsview, the mayor, Mel Lastman, has estimated that it will cost \$100 million every year to repair the public housing that exists in North York; every year \$100 million that a municipality has to come up with. That is really quite a staggering amount and it's not factored into the \$1 billion; nor are the costs of bringing sewer and water facilities up to provincial standards.

You can sit there all you want and talk about how this is not going to be affecting people, but everyone who has looked at it feels quite otherwise. The reality is that even your own friends are not particularly happy with what you're doing. The Canadian Taxpayers Federation has told you that — well, I'll quote you the Canadian Taxpayers Federation: "By shifting volatile social services, clearly a provincial responsibility" —

**Mr Tilson:** Mr Speaker, on a point of order: The member was doing very well commenting with respect to Bill 108, with respect to justice. She is now getting into housing and all kinds of other things. I understand the political debate with respect to megacity and other sorts of things, but that really doesn't have anything to do with this bill. So I'd ask that you direct the member to —

**The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson):** That is a point of order. I've been listening intently to the member for Downsview and I'm sure she's going to bring her argument and her debate within Bill 108.

**Ms Castrilli:** I'm happy to comply, Mr Speaker, but I was very clear at the beginning about what I was going to talk about and no one took issue. I said one of the things I wanted to talk about was governance and what level of government should be responsible for what. That is very much what Bill 108 is about, and it cannot be seen in isolation because it is in fact part of a larger plan.

I'm raising the question, have you really thought through which is the appropriate level of government? So I think it's very much in keeping with the theme of today.

The point is, as in other pieces of legislation that have gone before, people have questions, and you can't dismiss them and say, "Stick to the point." This is the point. The point is, what level of government should be responsible? What's your rationale? Why are you doing this? People are asking this everywhere and they're asking it about every single service that you're downloading on to municipalities.

The distinction between those services and Bill 108 is that at least you've allowed the flexibility for a municipality to enter into voluntary agreements. That's a big step up. You haven't done that with respect to any other legislation that is before us. That's what's appalling people. They do not see a nexus. They don't see an underlying philosophy. They don't understand why this is happening.

1630

What makes public housing a provincial concern? What makes welfare a municipal concern? Where's the rationale in that? Is public health now only a local concern? Is it no longer a provincial concern and, if so, why? Where is the underlying premise for whatever it is you're doing? That's really what the discussion ought to be about and that's what it is about.

If it upsets you that I focus you on the issues, I apologize for upsetting you but I do not change my course lightly.

**Mr Tilson:** I am not upset.

**Ms Castrilli:** I'm delighted to hear the member opposite is not upset.

In the interest of trying to be helpful, because I think this is a very serious issue and we've not explored it to any great extent, I'd like, just for the record, to read into the record some very thoughtful things that have been written by individuals who think about municipal law and delegated authority and democracy, the kinds of things one would think we would be discussing in Queen's Park but have not to date.

I refer first to Reid Cooper. Reid Cooper is part of the research group at Carleton University. For the information of members, this is a very thoughtful individual. He has a law degree from the University of Ottawa and from Carleton. He has a bachelor of arts in geography and philosophy and a master's degree in philosophy.

His field of study is, precisely, municipal law and delegated legislation. He speaks a great deal in a very recent article, published just at the end of last year, about municipalities and their status vis-à-vis the province.

He says: "In contrast to the image of the city as a mere efficient administrator, municipalities must cope with a web of arbitrary and confusing provincial constraints. This goes beyond the 100-plus provincial acts that govern municipal matters in Ontario, including the complex Ontario Municipal Act, to the various financial constraints."

No truer words were spoken when one considers the enormous amount of other activity and other constraints that are being put on municipalities as a result of the legislation we've seen in the House of late.



He continues: "These provincial constraints have two primary and related effects. Because the workings of municipal government are very confusing to outsiders, the municipality's vital role as a major centre of citizens' access is reduced and this sometimes results in citizens being inadvertently misinformed about matters such as restrictions on building. Part of this confusion is a result of the bureaucracy needed to run a large city. Much of it, however, is a result of the way provinces delegate authority for various local matters to a variety of different municipal bodies. Ontario has been particularly noteworthy for undermining municipal authority."

I think that says volumes about the kinds of activity we've seen in this chamber of late. Without very much understanding of the complexities under which the municipalities already labour, we are imposing — you are imposing — additional complexities, additional difficulties, very real financial constraints and expecting them to deal with it, with no consultation and with no warning. That is not the essence of democracy.

I'd like to read you another quote from this very same article. "Financial dependence on the province and the subsequent control exercised by the province through funding allocations is a direct result of municipalities needing provincial authorization to do anything truly innovative. The Ontario government now allows the municipalities a wider range of options for raising funds, but it is doing so while simultaneously placing a substantially greater financial burden on them by cutting provincial grants to local governments and, we might add, by giving them additional responsibility without the fiscal powers to be able to deal with them."

This is a very serious problem and one that needs to be addressed. Mr Reid Cooper is not the only one. Professor David Cameron, who is a noted constitutionalist, speaks very strongly about the fact that we have not given much thought to the kinds of powers that each level of government ought to exercise. He states that legal pre-eminence of the province in matters of local government is limited by the political strengths of local government. We should look beyond the narrowly legal dimension and consider the political realities within which both governments operate, therefore, to divide powers in a reasonable manner.

We should be asking whether it is appropriate for local governments to administer welfare and social housing, whether these are not properly the subject of provincial jurisdiction. We should be asking, what about child care? Should child care be just a local concern? We should be asking about public health. Why does that become only a local concern? Surely the provincial government has an interest in maintaining a level of health care for all of its citizens. Does it make any real sense to make these local and not provincial issues?

I would urge the members of the government and the backbenchers who are here and those who are not here but who are thoughtful and interested in these issues, as I'm sure you are and as I'm sure your constituents want you to be, to think long and hard about these issues before we vote on the many complex pieces of legislation that will come before this House.

So we come back to the administration of justice. What of the administration of justice? Should this be a local responsibility? It's a fair question. This bill answers it by saying it should be partly a local responsibility. We should go further and ask: Will this partial delegation contribute to fairness, to efficiency, to transparency in the justice system? Does Bill 108 reside in the proper level of government? If the result is a series of municipalities all duplicating the same justice system, is that going to be more effective, fairer, more transparent?

I think you could argue, as you in fact have, that duplication is not a good thing, that we're looking for more streamlined organizations. You haven't shown us what the cost benefits will be. It's something that I urge you to do in the next little while.

There are so many unanswered issues with respect to justice that certainly could be raised within the context of this bill. This bill does nothing to alleviate some very serious problems with the justice system, certainly since this government took over. I've stood in this House many times to talk about the fact that 50% of the cases before our courts are now in red alert. That means that alleged offenders could be released because they have not had their time in court, a very serious matter. There certainly is a cry for more money to be poured into the justice system. With some 450 prosecutors who handle 500,000 cases a year, it's going to be impossible to give our citizens the quality of justice they require.

The family support plan is one final item that I will simply highlight as one which this government, frankly, still hasn't handled. It does the administration of justice absolutely no good to hear the Attorney General and the Premier get up and say, "We're fixing the problem, we're fixing the problem, we're fixing the problem." How many times can you hear that? The problem is not fixed. There are thousands and thousands of people who are suffering, most of them children, because of the failure of the justice system and this government to address it.

1640

To return to the specifics of the bill, I will repeat what I said in the beginning: I think the bill in principle has some merit. It leaves too many questions unanswered. It's going to require much more certainty from municipalities. I would urge the government once again to think about what level of government ought to be doing what in Ontario. Even in this particular area you see the confusion already begins because there are instances where the Attorney General can step in and there are instances which are now fully delegated to the municipalities.

I will be looking forward to further debate with respect to this issue. I will say that this is a very important piece of legislation and it's been a pleasure to speak to it.

*Interjection.*

**The Acting Speaker:** Is there consent to split the time on this debate? Is it agreed? It's agreed.

**Mr David Ramsay (Timiskaming):** I'll have the pleasure of sharing the time with my fellow justice critic, the member for Downsview, and I'm very pleased to follow up on her talk. I see Bill 108 is called An Act to deal with the prosecution of certain provincial offences, to reduce duplication and to streamline administration. I've taken it upon myself to rename this act, as I think it



would be more properly called "Another Act to download costs to the property taxpayer," and I would ask for unanimous consent to rename this act. I'm asking for unanimous consent to rename this act "Another Act to download costs to the property taxpayer."

**Interjection:** I don't think so.

**The Acting Speaker:** There is not unanimous consent.

**Mr Ramsay:** That's fine. I just thought I'd try, because when I look at it, this is what this Bill 108 is. Unlike the mega-week announcements, where of course all of these costs were shoved down to the property taxpayer by the Harris government to our municipalities, this is a little trickier piece of work because this is downloading by invitation. What it should have is a health warning on here, like sometimes tobacco products have in this country, and in the States alcohol products have a health warning on them. The warning on this should be that "Entering into an agreement with the Harris government through Bill 108 to take on court administration and costs with the Harris government could be very hazardous to the bottom line and the budget of municipalities." Very definitely there should be a hazardous health warning on here to the fiscal health of our municipalities. I would certainly be making sure we would move that amendment in committee.

For the herbivores out there, this is the Venus fly-trap of downloading, because instead of the nice secretions that the Venus fly-trap uses to seduce flies to come in which it wants to feed on, what the Harris government is doing is using some potential revenues from tickets and fines to try to attract the municipalities into this sort of agreement. But again, because the municipalities don't exactly know what all the revenues are and certainly don't know what all the costs are, this is a trick; it's an entrapment by the Harris government to municipalities. I again say to the municipalities: You've got enough to worry about right now with the mega-week announcements. Be careful. Be cautious about this, because this bill, another act to download the costs to the property taxpayer, could be very dangerous to your fiscal health. That's a very big concern.

As I've said, this is not a forced downloading; this is an invitation. So it's discretionary on the part of municipalities. This is because the province wants to transfer the responsibilities of court administration, court support and prosecution services for part I principal offences, which are basically the minor sort of ticketable offences — jaywalking in town and those sort of offences — part II, the parking offences. Of course, they've got the power to issue those tickets, but now they would take on added responsibility from that, as well as the administration of the part III offences, which are the more serious offences with the Highway Traffic Act: dangerous driving, liquor offences. These offences would be handled probably with a court appearance and again would be costly to the municipality.

So it constitutes an invitation. Why the invitation? You just have to look at recent news clippings here this fall: Toronto Star, September 28, 1996, talking about the backlog of court cases in Ontario courts. Of course, this is a big headache for this government and this is one way to start to clear these cases from Provincial Court and go

into these newly established municipal courts that the municipalities would be in charge of.

I would warn the municipalities to be very careful about what they're getting into here, because what they're getting into are some additional costs, a lot of costs. You don't know right now what the bottom line is and what the balance sheet might look like with the potential revenues that are certainly there from all the fines that would be levied and the tickets that would be levied, but it's going to be costly.

One of the concerns many of the municipalities have is, exactly what are the potential revenues here and what are the costs? Part of the trap in this is that, looking through this bill, I see nothing in this legislation that would permit a municipality to terminate an agreement that they have entered into with the provincial government. Really, it's a permanent trap. If you get sucked in on the first go, you get seduced by these revenues from these fines and tickets and your costs escalate, then the municipality is stuck with this and the province has been very successful in downloading another provincial responsibility to municipalities.

I want to make it very clear that of course this is a provincial responsibility. In the Canadian Constitution it is the responsibility of the provincial governments to enforce the justice system, to administer the justice system. In the Municipal Act today it is not legal for our municipalities to do so, so part of this bill would be an amendment to the Municipal Act that would allow municipalities, if they so desire, to take on some of that constitutional responsibility that's been the province's up to now to administer the justice system.

I say to those municipal officials who may be watching, you've had in the last few weeks, as they say in the country, a full pail dumped on you, a big responsibility, and to even flirt with this Bill 108, this act to download some more responsibilities to the property taxpayer, I think would be very, very foolish.

This is something municipalities should be very careful before they get into, because who's to say how these costs could escalate over the years? Who's to say what additional responsibilities, what new laws, new regulations they may be asked to enforce after the fact that they've entered into this legislation? It's a slippery slope. It's a very dangerous area for a municipality to get into.

As I said, it has been tarted up. It has been made very attractive by the lucre of the fines from these provincial offences and from the parking tickets. This is something I'm sure municipalities will be very tempted to look at, but it's a trap. I think it should have a health warning on this that this could be very harmful to a municipality's fiscal health, for sure.

This, I think, is quite consistent with the government's pattern of downloading in all aspects of provincial jurisdiction, but especially in this criminal justice system of courts. We're seeing this in another bill that I believe gets second reading debate starting tomorrow with the Police Services Act. There's another area, where up till now OPP services have been delivered free of charge to municipalities of less than 5,000 population. There are some 372 or 373 municipalities that today receive OPP policing without any direct cost to their property



taxpayers. This is going to change. One could obviously look at the fairness of what the government is trying to do in the OPP policing, but coming at a time when all the various downloading is going on to the municipalities, Bill 108 being another downloading to municipalities if they wish to enter into it in this case, it is really a lot for these municipalities to digest, and certainly a lot for the property taxpayers in Ontario to digest, for sure.

1650

It's interesting to note that throughout all the propaganda of the Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario's Common Sense Revolution Premier Harris was and is to this day very adamant that there's only one taxpayer in this province. But what we've seen in this exercise, such as 108 and all the other downloadings, offloadings to the municipal partners of the provincial government, basically is an offloading of expenses and responsibilities to the same taxpayer but coming out of another pocket, the pocket that pays for the property tax.

The concern about this of course is the unprogressive nature of the property tax system. If the municipalities enter into an agreement with the provincial government, utilizing the amendment here to the Provincial Offences Act that 108 allows, there will be another downloading from the income tax system to the property tax system. There again will be added responsibilities to the same taxpayer Mr Harris acknowledges, but a taxpayer who doesn't really have the same ability to pay for those services through a property tax system that she or he would have through an income tax system. That is because — and I would hope most members realize that here, though I have to wonder with these transfers to municipalities if they really understand that principle. We know David Crombie understands that principle and begged the Harris government not to download the basic social and health services to municipalities, because of that very reason, because of the lack of ability to pay for those services, especially in hard times. That is the real problem with this exercise.

Bill 108 carries on just another aspect of downloading to municipalities. In this case it's administration in support of the court system in order to see the process through of administering provincial offences, all of those aspects, part I, part II and part III. This will be an added new cost to municipalities.

I hope the parliamentary assistant has the answer to this, because when I look at some of the concerns coming from AMO, the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, their concerns are: How are we to get a fix on what the actual expenses are of operating the court support system in our municipalities? It's not just for their municipalities, of course, but they would have to do that for the outlying municipalities if the court were centred in their town. What they want to know is, exactly what would be the revenue-sharing agreements between municipalities and what involvement does the province want in any of this? Can the municipality undertake to do the administration even though the court facility may not serve their municipality? How many provincial employees are affected and what are the labour implications to the municipalities?

What municipalities are saying through their criticisms of Bill 108 here is very similar to what happened in the

mega-week announcements and that is that the municipalities were not properly consulted. I've never seen a government act so rashly that, after a series of bills have been introduced, the so-called partners, in this case the municipalities, are basically sitting there and scratching their heads, wondering what hit them. What happened with all these downloading announcements? How come we didn't know about them? How are these things going to affect our municipalities?

I had the pleasure on Thursday night of last week attending our Timiskaming Municipal Association meeting in the hamlet of Earleton in the township of Armstrong in about the middle of my riding of Timiskaming. It was a very well attended meeting, one of the best-attended meetings I've ever seen of a municipal association. As the Speaker and other members would know, it is the usual manner that municipalities would nominate a councillor from a municipality, from a township or a town, to go to one of these municipal organization meetings on a district level. In my case of 26 municipalities, you get 26 people if they all turn up to these meetings.

In this case, though, we had whole councils from towns and townships coming before the Timiskaming Municipal Association, and the reason was because they had invited an official from the Ministry of Municipal Affairs to answer the questions and give a presentation about the whole downloading exercise, just like Bill 108. In fact, I think they weren't even aware of Bill 108 last week and that didn't even come up for discussion. They were so concerned about the previous announcements and how they were going to handle those, how they were going to be administered, how they'd be billed for those services such as long-term care and social housing.

These things are a real concern of our municipal officials. It was really important that the government should have consulted thoroughly with our towns and our townships so they would have an understanding beforehand and know that truly they are partners with the provincial government, rather than being treated as children, as I think they are through this exercise.

I think we're seeing a return of the patronizing, paternalistic government such as we used to see as part of the 42-year era, with Davis and Robarts —

#### *Interjections*

**Mr Ramsay:** Well, the Tories say they were good days, but the municipalities and all the partners always considered them a very patronizing government because they really were paternalistic in their relationship with municipalities. Boy, have we seen that attitude return in spades in the last few weeks. Bill 108 is just another one of these, but it's kind of a trickier way you're doing it here. As I said, you're basically entrapping them into a partnership that I think will be very detrimental. I was saying before our House leader came in that there certainly should be a warning sign, and I think that's really important.

I know there are other members in the House here who would like to speak to this bill and get on the record with this. It's certainly not for me to take all the time allotted, because I know other members have some ideas they would like to contribute to this valuable debate. I will surrender our time and thank the Speaker for recognizing



me and thank the House for listening to my comments on Bill 108.

**The Acting Speaker:** Comments and questions?

**Mrs Boyd:** It is a pleasure to comment on the speeches from the member for Downsview and the member for Timiskaming, both of whom point out some of the concerns as well as the positive aspects of this bill.

I think it is very important, as we discuss this bill, to point out what the pitfalls may be because, as is usual with this government, when the government presents things it talks about it all as though it's a win situation for everyone, and it may not be. It may not be the kind of situation in the long run that will have the kind of benefit that the government claims it will have for municipalities.

It's really important as we go through this to point out the atmosphere within which this bill is occurring, and both the speakers did that. They talked about the cumulative effect of the kinds of changes this government is making, the downloading of responsibility and of costs to municipalities without impact studies having been done, without real policy work having been done to see whether we will have a maintenance of standards when all these issues have been downloaded in such a fast manner.

The municipalities are saying very clearly that they want to cooperate to the extent they can and, obviously, given the financial challenges they face under the circumstances of the downloading that this government has announced, they will be eager to find any means of raising some additional dollars. That should be of concern to all of us, because if the focus of a justice action is to make money for the municipality, that is not necessarily serving justice at all.

1700

**Mr Tilson:** In response to the members for Downsview and Timiskaming with respect to their remarks on Bill 108, the member for Timiskaming particularly talks as if our government is attempting to trick the municipalities with respect to this issue. You have to acknowledge that under the legislation no one is compelled —

*Interjection.*

**Mr Tilson:** To the member for Timiskaming, no one is compelled to participate in this process. Everyone will receive an invitation. All municipalities are to receive an invitation to participate in this program. Some municipalities may be too small; some municipalities may not have the capabilities of carrying out this whole process. My understanding is that there are going to be 75 partnerships and it could take over the next two years to process this.

The member for Downsview talked about the fact that there has been no information with respect to startup costs and information as to developing the program. All they have to do is ask and this information will be gladly provided by the ministry. From that they can determine whether they can put forward a proposal with respect to entering into this program.

There's no trick. In fact, as I indicated in one of my earlier responses, municipalities around this province are eagerly awaiting the opportunity to participate in this proposal. I know in my own riding municipalities are considering this proposal and may indeed participate in it.

One of the issues that was raised by the member for Downsview was that of jurisdiction, indicating that the Attorney General has completely signed over his or her ability to intervene or to participate in these prosecutions. I refer the member to the section in the act that defines —

**The Acting Speaker:** The member's time has expired.

**Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines):** I thought both speeches of the members for the Liberal Party were very good. The critic for Attorney General and the critic for Solicitor General did an excellent job of analysing this bill and exposing it, particularly the title, "Another Act to download costs to the property taxpayer." Of course that's what this is all about.

The provincial government is cutting its income taxes, which of course will benefit the richest people in our society the most and will not take into account a person's ability to pay. They're dumping it on to the municipal property taxpayer; the municipal property taxpayer, whether he or she has a job, whether he or she has an income to speak of in a particular year, must pay those property taxes. Every municipal politician you talk to, the ones the Premier refers to as whiners, will tell you that it's going to be extremely difficult for them to assume the new responsibilities.

You're going to give them a chance to raise funds. It reminds me of the state of Georgia or the state of Mississippi, where you give the local municipality a chance to get some money through fines or some other provisions of that kind. It's a sad day when municipalities are going to be placed in this circumstance. They're going to be desperate for funding. They're going to be desperate to get money. That's why some of them will embrace this. One wonders whether they'll be able to handle all the costs associated with this when they analyse it.

Certainly it all comes down to the bizarre tax cut. You're borrowing \$5 billion a year to finance it, because you don't have the money right now — you have to borrow that money — and you're making cuts which even the most ardent right-wing government member could not have contemplated happening.

When they close the hospitals in Ottawa, my good friend from Rideau I know will be on his feet denouncing the government. I'll be supporting and applauding him when he does that.

**Mr John O'Toole (Durham East):** It's a pleasure to participate briefly on Bill 108. I just want to clarify for the viewers today that I think it's very important to read the language of the first section of part X, subsection 162(1). It says: "The Attorney General and a municipality may enter into an agreement with respect to a specified area, authorizing the municipality" to perform courts functions and administrative duties.

In section 3 in the part dealing with the municipal responsibilities, that's part II under the courts of justice system and the Municipal Act changes, it recognizes — I'll just put it in the record here very clearly — it says the municipality has the power to enter into an agreement, so it's choice, it's optional.

Here is I think where the economies of scale enter into this. I think it's widely understood that the local levels of government tend to be able to deliver services more



efficiently or perhaps more accountably at the lower level than perhaps at the province.

It goes on to say that, "The functions given to a municipality in a part X agreement may be performed by" current "employees," so they could make use of the clerk of the day who might otherwise not be completely occupied.

There are some economies that maybe once a week they could have court and make use of — for example, in subsection (4) it says, "The power to perform a part X agreement may be exercised in an area outside the municipality's territorial limits if that area forms part of the area specified in the agreement." In other words, they could serve a larger area than just a municipality. In fact, they could hold the court within the municipal building.

I think if you look at some of the opportunities for the municipality to establish this activity — convenience to the constituents, making use of full-time staff and also making use of municipal facilities — there may be efficiencies, and it's their choice.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin):** Thank you. Your time has expired. The member for Timiskaming, you have two minutes.

**Mr Ramsay:** Thank you very much. I think you missed my speech and I'm really sad for you that you did because it was really good, Mr Speaker.

I think the key to this is that it says here it's "An Act to deal with the prosecution of certain provincial offences, to reduce duplication and to streamline administration." When you were out I had asked for unanimous consent to rename the bill, "Another Act to download costs to the property taxpayer," because that's exactly what it is.

I'm just a little surprised because I know this government prides itself on its plain language titling of its bills. Certainly we've had quite a few of them like the Fewer Politicians Act etc. So I would think to be consistent you should keep a title such as this, because that's exactly what this is.

As I said in my speech, this isn't a compulsory download in this case, this is a seductive download. This is entrapment, if you will, by the Harris government to the municipal governments to take over the onerous and growing cost of court support and administration and prosecuting provincial offences. I think municipalities should really be warned to tread very carefully before they enter into these sort of arrangements with this government.

There's only one reason why this government's doing this. If the fines were so rich, if the income and revenue streams were so rich from these offences, then obviously they'd be wanting to keep it, so I'd be very wary of this sort of tradeoff that, "Yes, you can have all the revenues from the fines and tickets if you take over this administration." I just have to ask, if it was so good why would the government be forgoing all this revenue?

Again I send this warning to municipalities: I don't think this is a very good deal for you. Be very, very cautious before you enter into this.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Further debate?

**Mrs Boyd:** Before I start I'd like to ask unanimous consent for us to defer our critic's speech since he wasn't

able to be here this afternoon since this was called rather suddenly, and to continue with rotation until he is able to speak on this bill.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Agreed? Agreed.

**Mrs Boyd:** Thank you, Mr Speaker.

I think it's very essential for us to start off by saying that it is hard to argue with the objectives of this bill as they are stated. There is no question at all that the work that has gone on over the last 10 years in terms of trying to streamline and focus attention on getting the courts to work more smoothly, getting them to work more efficiently, getting some of the costs and the delays under control is very much something all parties in this House have agreed to. So the purpose of this act, if that is as it is stated, is certainly one with which very few people in Ontario could possibly argue.

1710

The problem of course happens because this bill is coming forward at the time that it is and the suspicion that has been raised in everyone's mind around this so-called wash, this switch of responsibilities, switch of revenues that this government has announced. I would submit to you that had this bill come forward in a different climate and at a different time, had it come forward with the kind of real discussion with the municipalities and with the police that ought to have been done, it would be rather easier for us to stand and speak about the impact of it as being positive. The Attorney General, when he gave his speech, said there had been lots of discussion, there had been a lot of work done, and he read out a couple of letters from a couple of mayors who indicated they thought this would be a good idea. The problem is that they seem to have said that under the impression that it was going to save them some money.

I recall, and I wish I could have it in front of me in Hansard, but of course it's too early for that this afternoon, that the Attorney General read out a letter from the mayor of London. One of the statements the mayor of London made was that doing this would somehow allow more police officers on the street. If that's what mayors who are in favour of this act think is going to be the natural consequence of it, it leads me to wonder how they think that is going to happen.

I ask the question because we have of course the Police Services Act that's in front of us as well, where there's a change from bylaw enforcement officer to law enforcement officer under the Police Services Act. I asked whether this act in any way makes it easier for municipalities to divest themselves through the police services commission of a whole slew of items that could only be enforced by police officers in the past.

I asked that question because of course it's essential for people to understand that this sounds like it is minor offences only, but let's look at what is actually included.

Administrative functions, prosecution and court support for part I offences: Approximately 80% of part I offences — regulatory ticket offences, except parking, which are punishable by fines of up to \$500 — are issued under the Highway Traffic Act. Those examples of part I offences under the Highway Traffic Act are speeding up to 49 kilometres over the limit — many of our municipal police forces, municipalities, are working with roads



where the limits are 80 or 90 or in some cases even 100 kilometres per hour, so these are offences that are speeding up to 49 kilometres over the speed limit — failing to stop at a red light or a Stop sign, improper left turn, failure to wear a seatbelt.

All of these are fairly serious offences, although they're considered minor offences. The administrative functions and the prosecution of those offences are serious matters for us in our community, and there are often serious issues raised in the prosecution of those offences which go far beyond a mere acquaintance, shall we say, with court process and with constitutional rights. There's a certain issue at hand here around the seriousness of those offences, and I'm not sure people really recognize that.

Non-Highway Traffic Act offences under part I include things like minor liquor licence infractions, such as an open bottle of liquor or being intoxicated in a public place, as well as ticket scalping under the Ticket Speculation Act. These are all included in those part I offences.

The part II offences of course are the parking tickets. That is why I emphasize, particularly to the government members, that we understand the reason why the efficiencies of assigning this to municipalities are good, because that's what we did with parking offences, and we found indeed that there were municipalities which were eager to take that on and have taken that on and that in some cases have been quite disappointed in the amount of revenue they have managed to obtain. They had, in some cases, greatly overestimated the amount of revenue that would be left over to them once they paid all the expenses involved in administering that part of the act. Some 95% of parking tickets are now handled by municipalities, and we know that there is no logical reason why that can't be done. The issues arise around how it is done, what are the standards, and how it is done when they are serious offences such as those that I listed under part I of the act, particularly the traffic offences.

It is quite clear that for the most serious offences, which are under part III, offences for which someone might be jailed, where there are very, very serious circumstances surrounding those offences, the province will continue the prosecution. I'm very pleased to hear that because it is very, very important that where jail might be a consequence of an offence, the province take charge of that prosecution. I'm delighted that that's the case. However, those provincial prosecutors are going to be having to work with the administrative functions under a municipality, and it is not clear, as I read through the act, whether that means provincial prosecutors will be working within the court setting that is set up by the municipality under the act. It is not clear what the security provisions will be for the prosecution under the act.

Those are all issues that have arisen before in our provincial courts and in our General Division courts, the Ontario Court, and it is important for us to understand exactly what the process is going to be. With this act, if there is an agreement between the municipality and the province, the municipality becomes responsible for determining where the court setting will be, for determining how records are kept, for determining the flow of records, for ensuring that records are present and that sort

of thing. One would assume the municipality would also be responsible for security.

Mr Speaker, you will well remember the huge outcry that municipalities made when they were made responsible for security in the provincial courts, and they continue to fight with the provincial government about those costs because they say that they got really burned, that the cost of providing that security was much higher than they expected it to be. So these are questions I'd like to ask.

I find it interesting that the Attorney General said that there had been a lot of discussion with police, because we contacted police chiefs who said: "We haven't even had any opportunity to talk about this. There's far too much going on with trying to create a budget, with trying to examine what the likelihood is of changes under the changes to the Police Services Act, changes under Bill 103. We haven't even looked at this, so we don't know what questions we have." That is not really, frankly, very helpful to any of us, as members of the provincial Parliament, when we are trying to find out what the concerns are of the people who have to this point been responsible for enforcing these laws.

My concern here is, because the act clearly talks about the prosecutors, defines the prosecutor in the following way under this act: "'prosecutor' means the Attorney General or, where the Attorney General does not intervene, means a person acting on behalf of the municipality in accordance with the agreement or, where no such person intervenes, means the person who issues a certificate or lays an information, and includes counsel or agent acting on behalf of any of them."

1720

That's not necessarily ominous, but with the concerns around the possible privatization, the hiving off and privatization of certain functions of the police, I would have thought the police would be asking very serious questions about whether the way this is worded anticipates that there might well be a connection between who is enforcing what in terms of the Highway Traffic Act or the liquor acts and so on, and then who is responsible for prosecution.

Police officers have often prosecuted in the past on the Highway Traffic Act. They have acted as agents. But this bill says that someone prosecuting under this act is not an agent of the Attorney General, an agent of the crown in right of Ontario or of the Attorney General.

What we are talking about here is a fairly fundamental change — that is section 169 — in terms of who is responsible for the ultimate bringing to justice of people who do not obey very serious laws. It means we no longer have a situation where there is going to be a consistency and a line of responsibility through the chief law officer of the crown, the Attorney General.

The member from Dufferin was about to say that the Attorney General has the right to intervene at any time in these cases, and he's right. This bill very clearly gives the Attorney General the right to intervene in any case at any time, and that should be some comfort to us, but the reality is that someone prosecuted under an agreement with a municipality has not got the same recourse as they would have had the prosecution been done under the



crown in right of Ontario or the Attorney General. So it is a different kind of process and a different kind of process for fairly serious infractions of the law.

I would point out, as I did in my response to the Attorney General's speech, that he is quite right. The act sets out in subsection 162(3) that, "Performance standards and sanctions shall be specified in the agreement; the municipality shall meet the standards and is subject to the sanctions for failure to meet them." But we don't know what those standards are and we have no idea what those sanctions might be.

What is really of concern here, as my colleague from the Liberal Party suggested, is that there will become a very uneven way of administering what ought to be a law which applies to all of us equally, because unless we're very clear about what the standards are, the standards of prosecution, the standards of recordkeeping, the standards of privacy of information, the standards of timeliness, unless we have some real clarity about what those standards are and what sanctions the government is going to be able to bring to bear on a municipality that finds it is not getting enough revenue if it spends the money it needs to spend in order to maintain those standards, then what recourse will people have?

We do not want to see ourselves in the same situation of many jurisdictions around the world where the pursuit of the almighty dollar becomes the purpose of the law, and we all have heard stories of jurisdictions where that happens. Some of us have even experienced it ourselves. It is something we have always been very proud about in Ontario: that we can be sure there will be a consistent standard of prosecution that is conducted in our courts. This leads, because it means it will be done by individual jurisdictions under individual different agreements. We don't know that there will be maintenance of a consistent standard. As we travel across this province, we will not know what the standard might be in one place or another.

This would not be nearly as worrisome if we could be very clear about the issue of who's enforcing the law, not just who's prosecuting the law and administering a prosecution, because we also have in front of us a Police Services Act which changes the composition of police services boards. A municipality now will have the right to appoint the majority of a police services board. No longer will the province have control over the composition of a police services board, a police services board which had certain standards that it needed to meet and certain requirements that it needed to meet in terms of the enforcement of the law. Now the municipalities will have control over the composition of police services boards.

This is an issue of very grave concern to police chiefs across this province and to those who are interested in the even administration of justice. It is particularly serious when we see a police services board controlled by a municipality that has been impoverished by the downloading of this government and will be seeking every means at its disposal to try and raise revenue.

This government constantly prides itself — almost break their arms patting themselves on the back — around the reduction in income tax, but what it is doing is removing from the whole regime of the ability to pay to a very regressive system of property taxes, sales taxes,

finest, various user fees, all the way across the line; a whole series of revenue situations which have no relationship to the ability of people to pay.

If the poorer taxpayers in Ontario think they are going to get a break, by the time you add up all the user fees and the increase that will be required in property taxes to meet the downloading we've heard, once we see a rampaging municipal structure that is looking for every dollar it can have because of these downloaded responsibilities, I can assure you it is going to become extremely difficult for people in Ontario to have any sense that this is a just society, that this is a system of justice that is based on the importance of maintaining public safety, the importance of maintaining a sense of trust and of security within our communities.

It will become instead, I think, quite frankly, a situation where municipalities will be so anxious to raise whatever moneys they can that they will enter into this kind of agreement, they will take the advice of the study that the Minister of Municipal Affairs conducted which clearly talks about a reduction in the police forces of this province, and we will see a very serious threat to the administration of justice as we know it.

This bill in and of itself — if, for example, we were sure what the standards were going to be — is not necessarily bad, particularly if what it does is reduce the crowding within our courtrooms, if it reduces the wait people have in waiting for trials, if it ensures that there is a more timely and more efficient collection and storage of records. If all of those things should happen, this could be a very good thing. But it is the context within which this is happening that makes everyone so suspicious and really raises a lot of concerns about what the end objective of this should be.

1730

It is important for us to understand how desperate this government is to convince the municipalities that this process of entering into an agreement with the province around the administration and prosecution of provincial offences. They are so desperate to sell this as a good thing because of course they have predicted that the municipalities may stand to gain as much as \$65 million as a result of this transfer. That \$65 million is part of what they call "the wash" that's going to happen between the province and the municipalities with this huge downloading exercise.

Since there has not been a great deal of discussion with the municipalities, since the municipalities at this point don't know what the standards are going to be around how they would deal with provincial offences — they certainly don't know how or where they are going to have the space to prosecute these, they don't know how much staff is going to be required; they haven't had that kind of detailed discussion with the ministry — they can only take the word of government that somehow they're going to come out \$65 million ahead. There's been absolutely nothing done, no figures, to show how this is actually going to work. If the government can produce those figures, then we would certainly say, "Let us see them and we will stop criticizing."

Our concern is, as far as we've been able to determine by talking to the municipalities, talking to the police



services, we cannot find any extensive work that's been done to show exactly how these costs would wash out in the long run. We don't see how the government can make that kind of claim that \$65 million is going to be left over, because right now these offences are being prosecuted, the court records are kept, the administration of the system is done within the court system, within the provincial system. The ministry can tell the municipality what that court jurisdiction cost is to it, but we all know there's such a thing as an economy of scale.

In a provincial court setting, particularly a unified court setting where you have both the provincial and the general division courts together and you have a system of courts administration and recordkeeping that does all of these offences, it may well show that the fines that are brought in in that setting are way more than the cost of administering that program, but we don't know how that would work out in individual municipalities. We really don't. The municipalities are getting told this is going to be a good thing, but they don't know for sure that this isn't just another ploy on the part of this government to try and sell them a bill of goods.

It will be very interesting to see, as time goes on, how many of the municipalities will be prepared to enter into agreements with the provincial government on this. What may initially be an enthusiasm, once they find out what the standards are likely to be, if of course the government maintains high standards that guarantee a reputable administration of justice around these issues, if in fact that should occur, we may find many of the municipalities saying: "We're not going to make enough money out of this to take on this added responsibility. We don't think this is an appropriate agreement for us to enter into." Then all of these predictions will go down the drain.

It's quite clear that this is a permissive bill in the sense that it allows municipalities to enter into agreements, it doesn't require them to do so, although with the draconian measures that this government has not hesitated to put in in many other ways — we keep in mind, for example, that restructuring of county governments and restructuring within the municipal sector was going to be something the government would encourage. Now it's decreed it in the city of Toronto, and in fact this morning I was reading in my paper that a restructuring commissioner has been appointed in Kent county to tell Kent county and Chatham how they ought to govern themselves, since they were unable to come to a voluntary agreement.

When we say this is a permissive bill that allows an agreement to be reached between the two jurisdictions, frankly, given the record of this government, I imagine many municipal councillors are sitting back and saying, "It may be voluntary today, but who knows what will happen tomorrow?" particularly if it's found that the revenues are not at all what they're set out to be in the great downloading system of all time.

It is very clear to me that there needs to be a great deal of work done to tell us what the standards are going to be, to tell us what the conditions are going to be, to actually look at what the costs would be associated with putting this kind of a bill into place. There certainly will

be labour issues that will arise between the municipal and provincial governments. The government of course, in Bill 26, destroyed succession rights for its own employees who have been carrying out these tasks. If it is any indication of what we've seen in other areas where they have done this, the municipalities are going to be very aware of the kinds of pressures they will be facing from their own unionized employees around the issues of those employees who will now no longer be needed by the Attorney General's ministry.

I would say it's quite clear that part of this is the necessity for the Attorney General's ministry to downsize substantially and that it is not, as some have said, to create more efficiency within the courts. It is, in fact, to reduce the staff in the ministry, to reduce the payroll of the government, to keep that almighty promise that this government made of smaller government. The way they do that is to pass their duties on to other levels of government and then say, "See, we haven't created more staffing; what we've done is show ourselves to be very efficient." What they have done in the course of it is to lose the services of people who have been dedicated to public service within this province and to whom we all ought to be grateful, rather than carping about the expense of high-class service that we have received.

In closing, I would say that if the minister or his parliamentary assistant were to come forward with some clarity around what the standards will be for the administration and prosecution of these offences, if they were to come forward and show us any kind of study that backs up their estimate of a \$65-million increase in municipal revenues as a result of taking this on, we would be much happier. We do not think it is fair for this government to bring forward this kind of bill, with the kind of assurances it has had, when it clearly has not done the study and taken the care that's necessary to ensure that this bill does not in any way impinge upon the quality of justice in Ontario.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Questions or comments?

**Mr Tilson:** The member for London Centre has raised a number of issues which — they've put up my time for speaking, Mr Speaker — it will be difficult for me to respond to in two minutes. Perhaps later, when I have an opportunity to speak, I will address some of her concerns.

One of the issues, in the time I have, is her fear of a municipality being too rigorous or not rigorous enough with respect to processes, and that's a reasonable question to ask; in other words, not enforcing the legislation or enforcing it too much.

1740

Her question with respect to provincial standards is a legitimate question and I can tell you that standards are being developed which will be made public with respect to prosecutions, security, administration. That will be made available hopefully in the very near future.

The agreements that will be entered into will be very specific with respect to meeting provincial standards, and I believe there'll be about 75 of these agreements around the province, in that neighbourhood at least.

Second, provincial officials will be able to monitor what is going on with respect to these particular municipal courts, and if they're not enforcing it they will make



sure they're enforcing it pursuant to the provisions of the agreement.

Finally — I wouldn't want to hang my hat on it — there's a political issue that obviously if the public who live in a particular community feel municipal officials are being overzealous or not specific enough, that will have an effect.

What the government is mainly concerned with: There will be provincial standards. I know the member is concerned and I can assure that those standards will be met.

**Mr Frank Miclash (Kenora):** I'd just like to congratulate the member for London Centre on her comments. As we know, as a former Attorney General of the province she certainly knows of what she speaks.

One of the main things I've heard in regard to Bill 108 is that there is a real lack of clarity in terms of questions regarding the court system, about who is responsible for what; it's much the same as Who Does What, but this is now who will take on the responsibility for what. One of the most outstanding questions that has yet to be answered is what the costs are going to be and who will be responsible for those costs.

As I've indicated in the House over the week, I attended the Kenora District Municipal Association meeting this past weekend and I have to say there were a good number of municipal leaders in that room who were quite concerned about the costs and what the costs are going to mean to their particular municipalities.

When the member talks about the police chiefs not having an opportunity to speak to Bill 108, this does not surprise me at all. It's something that I hear, not only from police administration, from court administration, but from anybody involved in government. It seems this government wants to barrel ahead, roll ahead, steamroll anyone who is in its way and move on with it without any consultation at all — I've talked about teachers a great number of times — no consultation with the people on the front lines, whether it be the people who are responsible for the court system, the municipal leaders, the teachers. I can go on and on.

One aspect the member points out that's a real concern of course is the uniformity of the providing of laws across the province and the pursuit of the mighty dollar.

Again, I would just like to congratulate the member on her comments and —

**The Deputy Speaker:** Thank you.

**Mr Len Wood:** I want to congratulate the member for London Centre for the excellent presentation she made on this bill. I listened to the comments that were made here today. I listened to some of the comments at the ROMA convention that I went to on Monday. People are coming and looking for answers and the parliamentary assistants and the ministers are saying, "We don't know yet what's going to happen, but we're going to dump this on to the municipalities."

As the member for London Centre said, it's a way of finding ways for the Attorney General to meet his target and lay off a whole bunch of well-paid government employees. It could mean that he's going to help the other ministers meet their target of 15,000 or 20,000 well-paid provincial employees and dump this on to the

municipalities, knowing that the municipalities have been cut back and been dumped on.

Whether it be social housing, welfare, social assistance, they've reduced everything right down to the bare bone and now they're being asked to enforce something that the provincial government always had responsibility for.

It's just another example of telling the municipalities and the cities in Ontario that here's some more responsibility they're going to have to look after, and somebody else to blame when people in the communities say, "Why am I not getting this type of service or that type of service?" Mike Harris is going to be able to say, "Don't blame us, that's the municipalities." At the same time they're telling the municipalities to take the poison pill and dissolve themselves and try to merge with some other community nearby and get rid of their town administrators, get rid of their mayors and town councils.

There are all kinds of questions out there and there are no answers coming from this government on any of the issues that have come up during the mega-week dump.

**Mr John R. Baird (Nepean):** I would address my comments to the member for London Centre on her remarks. She speaks with obviously a very good motivation on this issue from her experience as the Attorney General of Ontario. In her remarks she mentioned on a number of occasions her concern, once the bill becomes law, on the implementation of the bill. We should all be concerned and I think her comments there are very well taken, wanting to ensure the bill is implemented wisely and well.

I could maybe indicate one area of this bill that I think is positive towards my community. One area that has been a constant annoyance to the law enforcement community is when the local community has to pay for its police service, as they have in Nepean and Ottawa-Carleton for a good number of years. I can give her an example of an individual who phoned and said, "They're speeding in front of my home every day." The regional police in Ottawa-Carleton would have to pay for the speed trap on an ongoing basis; to have a uniformed officer on the street would be quite expensive a good amount of the time.

What this would allow, through the collections of the Provincial Offences Act, is the regional police to get the money back from that — after the victim surcharge of course — that could help them fund so they could put those speeders out of business. I think it could be the same, particularly for speeding offences near schools, and potentially even for drunk-driving offences. This could help offset the costs of the RIDE program, something that has been non-political and has enjoyed support from all three governments over the last 10 or 15 years. That's one component. I find there's a lot of support in my community that would indicate that support to her.

This portion of the bill, of the so-called mega-week, allowing municipalities to collect the money, is a provincial uploading, allowing the local governments and the regional governments in various parts of the province to collect some of those offence moneys when they're paying for the implementation of it, something that I think is long overdue.



**The Deputy Speaker:** The member for London Centre.

**Mrs Boyd:** I'm relieved to hear the parliamentary assistant say that standards will be ready soon. I hope they will be ready before we are asked to pass this bill. It is important for us to know what it is we are passing. I would simply say to the parliamentary assistant that, because of this headlong rush this government is doing, the kind of backup to make a positive bill out of this is not there.

If he had a model contract, for example, so that we could see how this implementation is going to take place, we would be relieved. I don't think there's a person in Ontario who is impressed with the ability of the Attorney General to implement anything after the mess of the family support plan.

So implementation, yes, is a very serious issue. How is it going to work? We are being asked to take on faith that it's going to be okay. Quite frankly, I think people, certainly on our side of this House, are getting very tired of being told, "Well, trust us," because so far there's not been a lot to trust.

The member for Nepean seems to assume this money is going to go into police services. There's nothing in this bill that suggests the money collected by a municipality will go into police services, nothing to require the municipalities to put this money into police services or to subsidize the police services that all of them are cutting because of the cuts in the provincial grants. All of them are requiring their police forces to lower their numbers, and across the province we are seeing great drops in both the OPP and municipal police forces, up to 1,000, for example, in the municipality of Metropolitan Toronto.

Although all these kind words and this soothing syrup comes for the government, the questions still remain. What is the long-term effect of this bill going —

**The Deputy Speaker:** Thank you. Further debate?

1750

**Mr Tilson:** In the time remaining today, I'd like to make a few comments with respect to Bill 108. We've heard from the minister and we've heard from both opposition parties with respect to their concerns. The opposition parties have raised some concerns which I think we're obliged to provide some responses to.

One of the questions that was raised had to do with consultation, as to whether this thing has just come out of the blue, and yes, the standards haven't been made available yet. That is a reasonable criticism.

The whole process, I believe, began approximately in June 1996 when the Provincial Offences Act project carried out a number of internal and external stakeholder consultations. They included people from a wide range and they included people from the judiciary. That began with Chief Justice Linden. There have been ongoing consultations with associated chief coordinator of justices of the peace, Marietta Roberts. Justice of the peace Carolyn Robson was assigned to consult and participate in team and task force meetings, and so on with respect to the judiciary. So there was a fair bit of consultation and there will continue to be.

Once the sites have been selected, I can tell you that the judges in those selected areas will receive briefings.

We will request advice from them with respect to those specific sites. So that process is ongoing with respect to the judiciary.

As well, the project team met with the Canadian Bar Association in October 1996. That too is going to be ongoing with respect to consultations with the Canadian Bar Association. Consultations are being planned with them. The meeting with the chair of the municipal law section of the Canadian Bar Association has taken place. There have been meetings with the Law Society of Upper Canada.

There have been meetings with the municipalities. Some of the members have indicated that the municipalities don't seem to know what is going on with respect to this whole concept. The project accepted six invitations to appear at the Crombie Who Does What subpanel. The subpanel advised on a format for municipal consultation. The subpanel recommendation was to consult with six localities represented on the subpanel plus a representative northern city. They were the city of Brampton, the regional municipality of Hamilton-Wentworth, the regional municipality of Metropolitan Toronto, the town of Milton, the regional municipality of Ottawa-Carleton, the city of St Thomas and the city of Thunder Bay. Site visits to these areas were carried out last year. There has been consultation around the province with the judiciary, with the police, with people in the legal field with respect to this area, so there has been a certain amount of preparation.

It was interesting hearing the comments from the member for Hamilton Centre. As has been indicated by the Attorney General, we are building on the successful transfer of parking tickets to the municipalities which was made, I believe, three years ago. The result of this transfer has, in our belief, been a service in that there's been a lower cost to the public as a result of this transfer of administration of justice with respect to traffic tickets in particular. Some 95% of traffic tickets are handled by municipalities, and our government is now taking the next logical step from that process.

Our intent is to eliminate waste and duplication, a consolidation of the administration of provincial offences, primarily ticketable offences, at one level of government. I could give the example that administrative processes are duplicated when two offices process a single certificate of offence. With our changes, only the municipal office would process the certificate.

That is the general intent as to why we are processing this legislation or introducing this legislation to be brought forward to the House at this time. I know some members, particularly the member for Timiskaming — I commented in my two-minute comment that he felt it was a trick. Well, it's not a trick.

Representations will be received with respect to proposals from different municipalities as to whether they'd be prepared to enter into these agreements that will be around the province. They do not have to be part of that. If you don't want it, then don't make a proposal. If you want information as to the financial aspect of it or if you want information as to how it can be done, you communicate with the ministry and we will tell you, and from there you — when I say "you," the municipality —



can determine whether or not you are prepared to put forward a proposal. At that stage, an agreement could be entered into between the municipality for a particular area and the province of Ontario.

Comments have been made as to whether a municipality is economically capable of handling this, whether they're able to handle the costs or whether they have the facilities to do it. The province won't accept those proposals. Unless the province is confident that this system can be administered by the particular municipality that's putting forward the proposal, it simply won't be accepted. Do you have the facility to hold the types of areas that these cases should be heard in? Do you have the staffing? Do you have the ability to administer it? If you don't have that ability, you're not going to get the proposal.

On the issue of startup costs, all of that information, I can tell you, will be made available.

There is a jurisdictional issue, and I tried to respond to that briefly from the member for Downsview when she made a comment that we, the province, were essentially assigning our rights to prosecute these offences to the municipalities. I can tell you that if you read sections 167 — I think the member for London Centre read subsection 167(2), and I won't read them again; it goes on into the right to intervene, section 168 and, finally, sections 169 and 170. I believe that if members will read those sections, you will see that the Attorney General clearly has the right to intervene, clearly has the right to prosecute and clearly has the right to appeal, so that the standards that have existed in the province of Ontario for so long will continue.

The member for London Centre, as I tried to answer in the brief response that we had from her remarks, was worried about sanctions, what will happen if the act isn't enforced or what will happen if the act is overenforced. Perhaps I could spend a few moments talking about that.

There is going to be a process of monitoring. Provincial officials will monitor these municipal courts to determine whether or not the agreements are being complied with, which will be very strict. These agreements will be very strict and very clear as to the provincial standards that will be required across this province. There will be a requirement for reporting to the province. There will be the right of the Attorney General to direct compliance so that if a municipality isn't complying with the legislation or isn't complying with the standards, the Attorney General will have the ability to require a municipality to meet those compliances.

The biggest stick of all, and I'm directing my comments, through you, Mr Speaker, to the member for

London Centre, is the right to revoke the agreement so that if a municipality is botching it, the province can revoke the agreement. We believe the threat of that will require municipalities to operate the system in the standards that we require, that will be of a provincial nature.

The other issue, of a political nature, is that the offences that these courts will be administering are of a local nature. They're local types of offences, speeding offences; the police are local, the accused are local, the people who are working in the systems are local, and it stands to reason that the process should be administered locally. I can tell you that if the fears of the opposition are that the charges aren't going to be enforced adequately or there's going to be an overzealousness of enforcement, the political people will hear of that and in turn that could reach the Attorney General. It's the agreement that will bear; it's the agreement between the municipality and the government that will be used to guide the process.

There were comments that there was a fear that police might be laid off as a result of this, that police who are now in the process would be laid off and that some lesser type of enforcement officer will be enforcing these charges. I can tell you the bill does not deal with who lays the charges. The Provincial Offences Act says it must be a provincial offences officer. So there's no change as to the type of officer who will be enforcing these types of charges. There is nothing in the bill or the Police Services Act that changes the functions as to what law enforcement officers can do.

*Interjection.*

**Mr Tilson:** I'm afraid I can't hear what the member for London Centre is saying, but I can tell you that the provincial standards that are being set forward in the various pieces of legislation, the Police Services Act being one, will be complied with.

As well, the prosecution standards will be spelled out in the agreements and they will be quite specific. I think it's fair for members to ask what will be in those agreements, and yes, we do not have that now. I can tell you that that will be made available hopefully in the very near future. Improper charges will be rejected by the courts, who will remain independent, and the province.

Mr Speaker, it being 6 of the clock, perhaps I could move adjournment of the debate.

**The Deputy Speaker:** It being 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 10 of the clock tomorrow morning.

*The House adjourned at 1802.*



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N° 162

ISSN 1180-2987

Première session, 36<sup>e</sup> législature

# Journal des débats (Hansard)

Jeudi 13 février 1997

Greffier  
Claude L. DesRosiers



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# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 13 February 1997

# ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 13 février 1997

*The House met at 1002.  
Prayers.*

## PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

### MENTAL HEALTH AMENDMENT ACT, 1997 LOI DE 1997 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LA SANTÉ MENTALE

Mr Patten moved second reading of the following bill:  
Bill 111, An Act to amend the Mental Health Act /  
Projet de loi 111, Loi modifiant la Loi sur la santé  
mentale.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson):** The member for Ottawa-Centre.

**Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre):** My private member's motion is to address the failings of a system that has caused severely mentally ill persons to fall between the cracks. My objective in bringing this bill forward is to enable them and their families to get the very best treatment that they so desperately need and deserve.

These severely mentally ill persons often lack the insight to continue treatment after they are released from hospital and/or after acute symptoms have dissipated. They are victims of a revolving-door syndrome because they end up in hospital several times a year, following a pattern of treatment, release, feeling better, non-compliance with medication, severe deterioration and return to hospital. Schizophrenics in particular occupy more hospital beds than people with cancer, heart disease, diabetes and arthritis combined.

Schizophrenia strikes one in 100 people at some point in his or her lifetime. According to the Schizophrenia Society of Ontario, 10 years after their first schizophrenic episode 25% have recovered completely; another 25% are much improved and living fairly independent lives; 25%, although improved, still need extensive support; 15% are hospitalized and show no improvement; and 10% have killed themselves.

It is estimated that at any given time, 2% of the population is suffering from a mental illness. A serious mental illness would include other diagnosable disorders, such as manic-depressive illness and other psychoses.

I believe that people have the right to be healthy. The purpose of the Mental Health Act is to provide treatment and to care where it is needed. Yet the very nature of some types of mental disorders, such as schizophrenia, which is a biological brain disease, prohibits the recognition of the illness by those who are acutely ill. Accordingly, they are unable to exercise their right to receive treatment.

My bill is not changing the process for involuntary admission. There are still three methods for application for psychiatric assessment: by a physician, a justice of the peace or a peace officer. There would still be a two-step test to be satisfied, and the first step remains the same.

Currently, in the second step, one ground for involuntary admission is that a person is suffering from a mental disorder that is likely to result in "imminent and serious physical impairment of the person." The word "imminent" is a problem for psychiatrists and for others, as it is taken to mean "immediate." Also, if the patient being admitted or any person on his or her behalf makes an application to a review board, the psychiatrist must be able to satisfy that board that he or she has met the criteria. This is too often problematic. "Imminent" became the test for all standards, according to the original drafter of the bill, which was not the intent of the bill.

My bill proposes two modifications: The first is to remove the word "imminent," while keeping the rest of the phrase, "serious physical impairment of the person." The second change I'm proposing is to add an additional criterion which is as follows: "Substantial mental or physical deterioration of the person that is likely to be alleviated by treatment in a psychiatric facility."

What we are trying to accomplish with these changes is to ensure that a person who suffers from a mental disorder may be admitted to a psychiatric facility as an involuntary patient if the disorder is likely to result in serious physical impairment or a substantial physical or mental deterioration of the person.

Many persons with schizophrenia live on the streets with no treatment. The Schizophrenia Society of Ontario claims that at least one third of the homeless have schizophrenia. Many others are in prison for crimes committed while in a psychotic state.

I know at first hand from my days as Minister of Correctional Services that many persons who were severely mentally ill ended up in the correctional system. On any given day, 15% to 20% of inmates in the provincial correctional system are mentally ill and could benefit from psychiatric or psychological intervention; 4% to 5% are so seriously mentally ill that they require heavy medication. Correctional officers are not equipped to deal with these situations.

In the past couple of years in my community of Ottawa-Carleton, there have been many unfortunate incidences which resulted in tragedies, including the death of a well known television personality as he left his office, a nurse as she arrived home from a night shift, a Department of Justice lawyer who was shot by her husband, and an 18-year-old youth shot by his father. Recently an 81-year-old woman was stabbed five times at a bus stop. An incident of possible violence at the



Prime Minister's residence by an intruder was averted. These crimes were committed by people with a history of severe mental disorders who lived in the community but were not receiving treatment.

I know that some of you are concerned about the rights of persons to make their own decisions about refusing treatment, and I am too, but I ask you to consider this: People with schizophrenia, the most severe of the mental illnesses, have serious difficulty obtaining treatment. The very nature of schizophrenia prevents those afflicted from recognizing their own illness. They often refuse the treatment and care that they desperately need. Refusing treatment is a common characteristic of the illness because they lack insight and cannot recognize their need for help.

Excellent treatment is available, according to Dr Lapierre, psychiatrist and chief at the Royal Ottawa Hospital and chairman of the Department of Psychiatry at the University of Ottawa. If patients are not treated effectively early they may have a worse outcome. Dr Lapierre claims that by the time he gets some patients they have deteriorated to the point where they need several months of treatment, whereas had he had them much earlier he could have had them functioning much better in a few weeks.

1010

Perhaps one of the most tragic cases I've come across is that of the Deighton family in Chesterville, just outside of Ottawa-Carleton. While there were indications of some family problems, the Deightons were private people who kept things to themselves. But Sheila Deighton lost both a husband and her firstborn son to schizophrenia; one killed the other in the family home. At the time, neither had been diagnosed with the disease although both had tried to access help.

Mr Deighton, who killed his son in a delusional state, had had a 26-year history of mental illness. He had been prescribed anti-psychotic medication by the family physician once earlier on, but stopped taking it because of side-effects. Their son Al had a serious suicide attempt in his late teens but refused treatment at the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario. He was not involuntarily admitted because he did not satisfy the test. Months later, when he finally did agree to treatment, he was not admitted because there was no space available at the time.

That's when things began to escalate in the family home and the tension began to build as the troubled relationship between father and son became unbearable, leading to a confrontation that resulted in the fatal shooting. Mr Deighton spent four and a half months in the Cornwall Jail until he was admitted to a psychiatric facility where for the first time he got the treatment that he so desperately needed. When he became fit to stand trial, he was found not criminally responsible for the death of his son.

Sheila Deighton is a remarkable woman. She has stuck by her husband and family and they have finally been able to access resources for the whole family. They are all working very hard to be reunited. The tragedy is that it had to take a tragedy to access the resources they so desperately needed.

I believe we must find a way as a society to balance the rights of persons to make their own decisions while recognizing that persons also have the right to be treated by the mental health system when they are not capable of making that decision for themselves. The proposed amendments in my bill continue to respect the rights of individuals while giving appropriate scope to the physician to make an application for a psychiatric assessment of the person.

I have received expressions of support for this bill from many persons, most notably the Schizophrenia Society of Ontario, representing 2,000 members. The president of that society, Selena Volpatti, is in the gallery with us today, as is Dr Russel Fleming, chief psychiatrist from Penetanguishene Mental Health Centre. Ms Volpatti wrote to me after I introduced my bill two and a half weeks ago:

"Thank you for your support of our cause. Due to the incidence of schizophrenia, at any one point in time, there are over 48,000 people in Ontario suffering from an acute episode of schizophrenia. Your bill can help decrease that suffering."

There is also a need to look at how we can provide continuing community treatment upon discharge. Although some provinces have attempted to accommodate such a provision in their mental health legislation, this goes beyond the scope of this particular bill. However, given the disproportionate number of hospital-day stays for this disease as compared with others, this private member's bill should be viewed as a necessary first step to address the very serious consequences for severely mentally ill persons and their families when they cannot access treatment. I trust that my colleagues on all sides of the House will agree with me and support this bill.

**Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre):** The issues that the member has raised in discussing his bill are indeed serious ones and all of us know of tragedies, some within our own families, within our own communities, that have occurred with people who have been diagnosed with a mental illness who have become a danger to themselves or others.

In making my comments, I want to be very clear that I know from personal experience how wrenching it can be for a family whose major goal in life is to protect someone who is unable to look after themselves or unwilling to take medication that would help that. I know how tragic that is and I know the consequences are often tragedies for others who are not even involved.

We already have an act that gives us an ability to involuntarily institutionalize people who are a danger to themselves or others. What the member is proposing is a loosening of those criteria, which I respectfully submit would not guarantee treatment, which is what he is talking about.

We basically are looking at a situation in our society today where we are seeing the closure of institutions which normally would have been the place where involuntarily committed people would have been sent. The member himself says, "Yes, the person got a committal order, they were assessed, but there was no treatment available for them." That is only going to get worse. This government is in the process of restructuring hospitals.



They have already restructured psychiatric facilities in Thunder Bay. We expect that to happen in the London-St Thomas area.

The reality is that all this member's bill would do would be to give the police an excuse to detain people. We have to be very careful when we have a situation where we cannot guarantee treatment, which I know is what the member wants and what the families want; when we really are looking at a situation where people who behave peculiarly are immediately looked upon as being possible mental patients and are being seen as a threat to others when in fact that may not be the case. You need a very high threshold in order to involuntarily incarcerate someone.

Part of our task today is to try to look at that other side and look at the rights issues. The member says constitutional rights are still protected. There is a real question about that. Certainly the ARCH group, the Parkdale Legal Clinic, the Canadian Mental Health Association are very concerned that this lower threshold the member is talking about would indeed infringe upon the rights. They are saying, "Let's have a further discussion of this." If this Legislature decides to pass second reading of this bill today, let's send it to the justice committee. Let's canvass all the viewpoints and look at the reality of the rights issues, the reality of whether or not this lower threshold would guarantee the treatment that this member wants to see.

I will say to you very frankly that one of the biggest issues for those who are trying to care for those who have schizophrenia in particular, but also other forms of delusional illness, is that there are very few community-based organizations in place to offer the kind of services that would allow people to access them without being incarcerated.

I'm going to be a bit provocative and read from Thomas Szasz, who has been considered to be a renegade psychiatrist in the United States but who has spent his entire career as a psychiatrist, working hard to prevent the involuntary incarceration of people in mental institutions. In his book *The Second Sin*, on page 88, Dr Szasz makes the following observations:

"It has long been popular to bewail and denounce the inhumanity of incarcerating sane men in madhouses. To incarcerate so-called insane men is, in this view, permissible, because for them the 'hospitalization' is a form of medical treatment, unpleasant to be sure, but always necessary and often helpful.

"This view is wrong, and not only because there is no such thing as mental illness." This is a psychiatrist who talks about the myth of mental illness. "It is wrong also because it is based on a fundamental misunderstanding of the medical ethic. In medicine a dangerous or mutilating intervention is permitted, not so much because it helps the sick person recover from his illness as because he wants it. For example, a patient with a cancerous lung may have part of his lung removed. It would indeed be horrible if a surgeon did this to a person whose lung is perfectly healthy. But it would also be horrible if a surgeon did this to a cancerous patient against his will. For, in the final analysis, what makes a medical intervention morally permissible is not that it is therapeutic, but

that it is something the patient wants. Similarly, what makes the quasi-medical intervention of involuntary psychiatric hospitalization morally impermissible is not that it is harmful, but that it is something the so-called patient does not want.

"Involuntary mental hospitalization is like slavery. Refining the standards for commitment is like prettifying the slave plantations."

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This is an extreme view, and I would say that many of us would want to have a thorough discussion about the kinds of issues raised in Doctor Szasz's statement and the kinds of concerns raised by the legal clinics, raised by those who really are concerned about involuntary medical treatment of people against their will.

We just went through a very long process of talking about the health consent act. One of the provisions that was put in there, the so-called Ulysses clause, was an attempt to deal with some of the concerns of those who have been diagnosed as having a mental illness, as well as their families' concern, that when people are well enough to make decisions they can make a decision that, should they become ill again and refuse treatment, they have already given their permission for. I believe that is a very important clause, and it is one that should give us some comfort around some of the situations.

I also believe we should not completely dismiss out of hand the concerns the member for Ottawa Centre has raised. I believe this is an opportunity for us to canvass all the issues and to try to come to a solution that is going to be protective not only of those who suffer from mental conditions themselves but the rest of society. But to simply go ahead and lower this threshold in the way suggested without that thorough discussion, without being sure we are not damaging the very strong principle we have developed over years in this province that those who are treated by medical personnel are treated only with their consent — I think we need to look very carefully at that, and I would urge the members that if it is the will of this House to pass this bill, that at the very least it be directed to the justice committee for a thorough discussion of the issues of these conflicting ethics.

**Mrs Helen Johns (Huron):** I am pleased today to rise to enter into this debate with the member for Ottawa Centre. I must say, as have both members who have spoken so far, that this discussion touches all people. I think each of us knows a family affected by schizophrenia or we know someone who is touched by it.

In my particular riding I have a family with a young man who, as the member for Ottawa Centre said, works well in the community and is in the community, stays on his medication and is fine; he starts to think he's feeling okay and doesn't need to take his medication, and as he doesn't take his medication certain things start to happen to him.

His parents call me many times as he's living on the streets, living in garages, worried about him and unable to do something for him. I have sat with them, talked to them and shed tears with them, so I feel very strongly about this issue too, as I know my colleagues opposite do, and we need to do something about this issue. It breaks my heart to think about this, yet when I read this bill today I wonder how this is going to help them.



In the mental health legislation we've had a history of trying to put Band-Aids on things that aren't working within the system. We have a history that has plagued the governments before us. As you know, this legislation was introduced by the Liberal government, of which the member opposite was a cabinet minister at that time, and we tried to talk about this word "imminent" then. Along the road we have taken in reforming mental health, some mistakes have been made. I am the first to admit that, as I think many people in this House are. My members, especially Mr Vankoughnet and Mr Rollins, are very concerned about this issue. They want to do the right thing for families with schizophrenia and for mental health as a whole.

We've been working on mental health for a number of years. In 1983 the Heseltine report came out and suggested that we make a number of changes to mental health. It talked at that particular time — in 1981 the Provincial Community Mental Health Committee, under the direction of Robert Graham, developed a framework for the delivery of a community mental health service in Ontario. In this report they made many recommendations that would coordinate and integrate mental health within our communities.

As the member from the third party has talked about, we have been downsizing institutions and trying to get people into the community, so we face a number of challenges. All three governments have been involved in this. We need to look very carefully at how we can put the mental health legislation we have on our records to meet the changing needs in mental health. Some of the things we have all talked about doing is putting more money into community mental health. We're all trying to do that, as I think mental health is a non-partisan issue in this House.

As I mentioned before, any changes we make to the Mental Health Act legislation have to be done cautiously. We have to get together, we have to talk to all groups affected by this. In this case, because we're sitting in January as opposed to coming back in March or April — I'm sure there are things all of us would have done to make this legislation a little different and maybe more acceptable to us all.

Today as we vote — and we're voting as a free vote on our side — I want everyone to be aware that we're not voting against doing something to help schizophrenia in our community. But I am concerned about the way the bill is written; there are some things that really bother me. I'm not in any way saying that the member for Ottawa Centre has not done a good job on this, but if I were going to be doing this bill there are things I would want to add. I am very concerned that if we take this bill to committee today, we haven't touched some sections — if we don't get unanimous agreement, I can't make changes to those.

It's my commitment today to say that I'm very concerned about this issue too, to the member for Ottawa Centre. This is an issue that all of us want to do something about and I think we should come together and do something about this.

I want to talk about some of the things that I think need to be changed in this bill and that have not been

opened up for us to be able to discuss in committee. The member for Ottawa South would like to add the criterion "substantial mental or physical deterioration of a person is likely to be alleviated by treatment in a psychiatric facility" to the criteria to order a psychiatric assessment. The phrase "is likely to be alleviated by treatment in a psychiatric facility" is problematic, because the police and the justices of the peace usually do not have the expertise to determine whether treatment in a psychiatric facility will alleviate substantial mental or physical deterioration.

This problem is made more difficult when one considers that a physician, police officer or justice of the peace must form the opinion that alleviation of a substantial mental or physical deterioration is likely. Accordingly, this requirement may operate to prevent physicians, the police or a justice of the peace from seeking a person's examination or assessment where they do not have the expertise and/or enough information to form an opinion about the benefits of treatment or whether the benefits are likely.

In my discussions with caucus colleagues, the minister responsible for seniors, the Honourable Cam Jackson, pointed out that there is some potential here for the abuse of seniors, and I'm very concerned about this. A senior in the beginning stages of Alzheimer's may be found by police officers wandering around the streets, having had a temporary memory lapse, as we know happens in the introductory stages of Alzheimer's. The policeman at that point has to decide whether this person would benefit from being put into a psychiatric hospital. That's a very difficult decision for a policeman to make. If it were my mother and it was the introductory stages of Alzheimer's, I would like my mother to be brought home to familiar surroundings so that I could help in making some determination of what we would need to be able to help her. I think it's very important that we consider what we're asking here today our policemen and our justices of the peace to decide, and how we can better make this work for the families and friends of people with schizophrenia.

1030

The word "imminent" in the Mental Health Act has caused concern for a great deal of time. I certainly am cognizant of that and I certainly want to do something about that. I think we could introduce a more comprehensive piece of legislation.

For instance, I think we need to have considerable debate. I know that we need to have it within our caucus here and probably within the other two caucuses and then as a three-caucus team, to talk about community treatment orders. These have been used in a number of areas in the United States and across Canada. What happens in this case is that they outline a particular course of treatment for a patient, who must comply with the orders or the psychiatrist can ask the patient to come in for an examination. If they refuse, the psychiatrist can order the person's apprehension for the purpose of an examination.

This section in the act has not been opened at all today under the member for Ottawa Centre's bill. I would like to come together once again to talk about these things with the schizophrenia society, with mental health, with some of our other groups to make this good legislation.



We have piecemealed this legislation for so long, let's spend a little longer and get this legislation right. The people who are suffering from this deserve our help on this issue.

**Mr Gilles E. Morin (Carleton East):** Mr Patten's bill is an important effort to close a gap in the health care system. The Mental Health Act, as it stands, is impeding those who are in a position to help the dangerously mentally ill. The problem is that the interpretation of "danger" is too strict, and that means that desperately ill people get help only when they go to extremes of anti-social and criminal behaviour.

Apart from needless human suffering, the cost to society — to its social, health and justice systems — is much greater than if intervention has been allowed to occur earlier. In our desire to protect the rights of the individual, we hold that the only way to maintain those rights is by what people say. In our search for absolutes, we can overlook the subtle points of how those rights apply to certain people.

There are cases where an individual may not be in the position to state their needs in a simple way. Human beings are incredibly complex. Many people are unable to express their needs and feelings and rely upon the people who care for them and interpret their behaviours to understand the complex motivations behind them.

Teenagers at the height of their rebellion, when they seem to want nothing to do with us, need us more than ever. Why then do we accept an obviously disturbed person's actions as their preferred state when we can tell that they are in an agony that is even more expressive than words can say?

Some of our colleagues have said that street people have chosen to be there. "Chosen" is a hollow word when we realize that some 30% to 40% of street people suffer from schizophrenia and don't understand "choosing" the way we do. They are in the grip of an illness they certainly have not chosen and in circumstances no one would ever choose.

As Mr Patten has said, individuals have the right to be well. I think we can safely assume that the wish to be well and healthy is a universal desire. In the case of great suffering, some people might want to put an end to it all. However, in most cases, if relief from pain is offered, that is always the preferred option.

Should someone who is obviously suffering but has an illness that prevents him or her from asking for help be denied it just because they can't express their need for it in a simple way? I am thinking of the recent case of a Bowmanville man with a long history of paranoid schizophrenia who senselessly killed his elderly mother and six-year-old stepdaughter because he believed they were Satan. When his agitation was growing prior to the murders, I'm sure that those close to him had a sense of how dangerous the situation was getting but had no way to get help under the present system. The tragedy of a situation that could have been prevented is so sadly underlined by the man saying, as the police took him away, "I wish you would just shoot me."

Mr Patten has briefly stated and described other similar cases of tragedies that were allowed to overtake the lives of entirely blameless people, and the stories are incredibly sad because every one of them is a victim.

Only days ago, another man with a history of psychiatric problems tried to drive his Jeep into the Parliament Building in Ottawa. He was in despair over the murder of his nephew a couple of years ago. Although it is lucky that no one was hurt, he is now in jail, in the same cell block as his nephew's killers.

It is a well-known fact that the sooner the mentally ill person gets treatment, the better their prognosis. The better their prognosis, the more we all gain in resources that can be directed in encouraging the growth and health of our population, and in the health and wellbeing of those who can again become whole and contributing members of their families and their communities.

Some people have said that community support services should be the option of choice. I would argue that support of this bill does not preclude the need for those services or our support of them. However, realistically we know that not enough of these services exist to meet the current need. Until there are, and to serve those in immediate need, the option of institutional care must continue to exist.

Mr Patten's bill modifies the Mental Health Act in a subtle but important way, but does not in any way alter the safeguards of the system already in place. There are a great number of people who would say that the time for these changes is long overdue.

Let's use our common sense and do what's right for these people. It's time to do it. I believe we all agree that we want to do the right thing in dealing with this issue. Let us settle the issue once and for all. Let us send it through second reading and to the justice committee, as you propose. Let's discuss it, and let's find a solution which will be satisfactory to us all.

**Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South):** Unfortunately the amount of time we have to debate here in private members' hour doesn't give us as members the time we need to discuss a very complex issue. In the six minutes and 32 seconds I've got, I'm going to try as best I can to put forward my point of view, which is in opposition to this particular bill. I'm going to be very direct. I'm not going to mince words because I feel very strongly about this for a number of reasons.

As other members talked about earlier, many of us in our personal lives, in our family lives, have seen people who suffer from schizophrenia go through various bouts with the illness. There are ups and downs, and those downs can be pretty down. In my particular case, my own sister Louise has had schizophrenia for over 10 years. We've known the good times and we've known the bad times with Louise.

What we must never, never lose sight of is that Louise is an individual, is a human being who has rights. If we in this Legislature try to say that somehow or other we're uncomfortable with what happens with Louise when she's having her down times, that we want to give the police and others the right to take her off the street and put her into a psychiatric institution, I very much worry what that means for Louise.

I, for one, am not going to support a piece of legislation that would make it increasingly easy for the police officers in our society today to literally go out into the streets and start sweeping the people off the streets on the



basis that they think they may be suffering through a bout of a delusional illness. I think it's very, very dangerous.

The issue is simply this: We have a policy that we set out back in the early 1970s. We said we were going to start depopulating psychiatric institutions, because there was a day when it was very easy to commit people, and that's what we did. We didn't want to deal with the problem so we put them into psychiatric institutions and we said: "If we put them out of sight, they're out of mind. It's something that we don't need to deal with."

Only through the policy and a very tough decision that was made by governments in the 1970s to start depopulating institutions did people start to come back into the community so that we in the community who were not very knowledgeable about what delusional illnesses were all about had to, as a community, start dealing with it. We had to start to put in place community supports so that people who came out of institutions had somewhere to go and had some form of support when they came out into the community.

The problem we have today is that there's not enough money to put into the supports in the community, so we're seeing it in a way that I think is disserving to some, especially in places like the city of Toronto, where you see a lot of people with schizophrenia and other delusional diseases who may be out on the street and people are looking for a way to be able to take them off the street.

1040

So I say to the member, I understand what you're trying to do and I sympathize to a certain extent that you want to make sure people are not a danger to themselves, but the present law deals with it. For my own sister and others whom I've had to deal with inside my community who have had bouts where they've been down and they've had problems, there are presently provisions within the law that you can go to a justice of the peace and say, "I believe this particular individual is a danger to themselves or a danger to somebody else." If you're prepared as a family member to take that responsibility and go to the justice of the peace along with the patient's doctor, you can have that person committed for a period of time in order to properly deal with that particular episode. I and my family have had to do that, and it's not pleasant, but we need to take our responsibilities as family members to assist our family members, our loved ones, when they're having a difficult time.

If we allow Bill 111 to happen, I think we're taking families off the hook to a certain extent, because it's not pleasant for families to have to go to the JP and ask to have the form 1, 2 or 3, whatever the number is, signed in order to get that person into the psychiatric institution for a period of time. What we're doing is letting the families off the hook, in my belief, so that we would allow the police to go out and do our dirty work for us. I for one, as a New Democratic member of this assembly, don't want to put the police into that situation. I think a lot of police officers would feel uncomfortable, number one, with having that kind of power. Number two, who is going to judge? In the legislation that the member is proposing, we're talking about we would be able to put people into institutions if the physical or mental state is

in deterioration. Who's to judge where that is? I'm certainly not prepared to give the police officer the right to judge just how bad a person is so that we may be able to commit them.

We have a system in place now that certainly can be improved. I have no difficulty with referring something off to a committee or with the Legislature itself dealing with a piece of legislation that tries to find some progressive ways of being able to deal with how we protect people in times of need. But to give the police that kind of power I think is really, really dangerous. It would set us back 20 or 30 years in the advances we've made over the past 20 or 30 years dealing with delusional illnesses in our society. Policies in order to deal with that in our communities would be set back a long, long way.

I simply say this: People like Louise and others are human beings. They live in our society and they have rights equal to, not greater and not lesser than, anybody else in this assembly or anybody else in our society. I think it is our responsibility as legislators to make sure we protect those rights, especially the rights of the minority. In this particular case, I think there might even be a majority of people in our society who may feel comfortable with a bill like Bill 111, but it's incumbent upon us as members of this assembly to say, "No, let's resist this."

There are presently laws in place that respect the individual and also respect society in making sure that if the person is a danger to themselves or a danger to society, there is a provision to be able to bring people into a psychiatric institution. But there's a time limit on that, for very good reasons, so that the person, when they get back on their medication and things start to clear up for them, can sign themselves out, and again, there are very good reasons why we do that as well.

I for one will not be supporting this legislation. Although I understand what the member for Ottawa Centre is trying to get at, I disagree with the way he's going about it. If you wanted to do something in order to respond to some of the needs of the Ontario Friends of Schizophrenics, I'd be more than prepared to find some way to have an all-party committee to take a look at how we change the current act to be able to deal with some of the issues you talk about. But to do it under Bill 111, I think there are all kinds of problems in doing it this way, and the biggest problem in the end is that many people like Louise would end up at the wrong end of the stick on this particular piece of legislation and would be very much in danger of losing civil rights that we all enjoy in this province.

**Mr Jack Carroll (Chatham-Kent):** I have a few minutes this morning to make some comments on this particular issue, and I'd like to start off by going back in history a little bit to November 28, when we debated Bill 91 in this House.

Bill 91 was a private member's bill put forward by the member for York-Mackenzie that basically was asking for additional rights to be given to parents relative to health care for their under-aged children. It wasn't to be able to make decisions; it was just the right to be informed about both mental and physical health care issues about their under-aged children.



It was interesting at that point in time that the member who is now proposing this bill and all of his colleagues voted against giving parents those particular rights, and now today he's asking us to give additional rights to policemen, justices of the peace and general practitioners over complete strangers. He's asking that we give those people the unilateral power to decide that a complete stranger would benefit from confinement in a psychiatric institution.

I'm sure the member, when he has a chance to respond, will be able to clarify for me why he was against the rights of parents to have some input over health care issues for their minor children and he's in favour of complete strangers having absolute control over issues of confinement for people with mental health problems. I'm sure he'll be able to explain that.

The purpose of the bill, as he sets forward, is to ensure that people with a serious mental illness are not allowed to deteriorate while living in the community, but rather get the treatment when they need it, which is often when they are incapable of making informed decisions concerning their need for medication and hospital admission. Very, very admirable. I don't think any of us would argue with this particular purpose.

The thing I'm concerned about is that, to accomplish this purpose, he's asking us to approve that justices of the peace, police officers and general practitioners are given the power to determine that a person's condition is likely to be alleviated by treatment in a psychiatric facility.

I will agree to the fact that most general practitioners could make an informed evaluation. I do not believe that any justice of the peace or police officer has had the training to make that type of assessment. I also submit, based on those I've had an opportunity to talk to, that they do not want that responsibility to make the determination that a person they encounter would benefit from confinement in a psychiatric institution.

The Canadian Mental Health Association, Ontario division, has stated: "Our organization has grave concerns about the amendments to the Mental Health Act proposed in Bill 111; in particular, the removal of the word 'imminent' and the addition of a third criterion to each of the sections mentioned." They talk about both of those things being a serious deprivation of a person's liberty.

There's no question that we have a very difficult issue we're dealing with. Unlike the member opposite in the third party, I do not have any firsthand experience with persons suffering from schizophrenia, but I know from other experiences that it is a very difficult issue.

What we are dealing with here is the balance between protecting somebody's rights, the rights of individuals to make their own decisions, as opposed to allowing a knowledgeable person to intercede or interfere in the best interests of the person who is temporarily unable to make their own decisions. If the current Mental Health Act has a failing, it certainly errs in favour of a person's individual rights.

If we decide to give expanded rights to complete strangers over somebody just because they're suffering from mental illness, we start down one of those famous slippery slopes, those slippery slopes that the official opposition are so much inclined to accuse us of starting

down. I don't believe we should start down that slippery slope. I do believe we need to assess this whole area. I don't think these amendments to the Mental Health Act are the place to start. I think there are basic flaws in here and I'm appalled that we would say to complete strangers, with no training, that they have the ability now to make a determination that somebody would benefit from being confined to a mental institution, to a psychiatric institution. I can't imagine that we would want to start walking down that road.

Based on that, I believe the amendments proposed in this piece of legislation are not in keeping with what we believe as legislators. I don't believe they're in the best interests of the average person. I don't believe it is the place to start further discussions on this issue, and because of those reasons I will be voting against this particular bill.

1050

**Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines):** It's always an interesting opportunity to participate in what is private members' hour where ordinarily the political considerations, the partisan considerations, are pushed aside and members look at these matters in an independent way.

This is a very difficult issue to deal with. There's no question about it. There are significantly good arguments to be made on both sides of the general issue of who shall be in charge of determining whether a person requires psychiatric treatment and whether that treatment should be on a voluntary basis or on a compulsory basis.

Years ago the rights of psychiatric patients were clearly placed in legislation. In fact, the legislation was liberalized rather considerably over the years because of significant pressure which was placed on governments, which recognized that the rights of psychiatric patients years ago were not very great, did not predominate.

The pendulum swung considerably, if you will, to the left on this issue — I don't know whether you can say "to the left" — but towards liberalization and more rights for those individuals, to a point where there are many now in our society who are absolutely beside themselves when they see members of the family or friends or others in society who are genuinely hurt by the fact that they're not receiving psychiatric services and they're not going, of their own volition, to seek those services.

Those amendments to the Mental Health Act were made in good faith over the years. I wasn't always in favour, I might say, of some of those changes that were made, but I recognized they were in good faith and I recognized that there was a problem.

The support services that are there for schizophrenics in our society are clearly inadequate. I think it's safe to say — and while some may misinterpret this, I do not mean it in a partisan sense; I mean it only in terms of what the government's general thrust is — it's unlikely this government is going to place a lot of money or a lot of funding in additional services for schizophrenics. That is not what you're about, that's not what you were elected for. I'm not being at this point critical of that, but I think it's unlikely that's going to happen. You look at other alternatives then, as you people will in so many areas look to other alternatives which are not of a funding nature.



I think the member is reacting to many cases that are brought to our attention. I know people who have contacted my constituency office over the past 20 years and who have problems with members of the family. I know one woman who said her daughter would be dead within two years, and her daughter was dead within two years. I'm going to tell you, it was very frustrating not to be able to do anything about it, not to be able to require treatment for this daughter who clearly was damaging her own health, mental and physical, and was heading in a direction where eventually she would be dead. This woman pleaded with not only members of the Legislature and the federal Parliament but local people and the news media and so on. And there was the prediction. It was sad to see that prediction come true. That's what's facing these families. They don't hate the people in the family; they feel for those people.

Yes, they can be a disruptive force for an entire family. They can be, if you want, a nuisance to certain people in the family, and I know that's where some people would be a bit reluctant about this bill. But really, for the most part, I think overwhelmingly, it is for the mental health of those patients that the family feels and that others in society feel.

I'm glad the member has brought this forward. This is an issue that needs discussion. I would hope it would go to a committee and the concerns expressed by members would be voiced there. If any amendments or changes to the proposal are required, I think they can be done in the committee.

#### *Interjections.*

**The Acting Speaker:** Order. Excuse me. There are too many conversations. If you need a meeting, please remove yourselves from the chamber. It's disruptive to the Speaker, it's disruptive to the debater. We all want to hear the member for St Catharines's comments.

**Mr Bradley:** I simply appeal to the members to have this issue dealt with, because it has been brought to our attention so many times. There are people who are very much afraid of certain members of their family or friends who have psychiatric problems that could be of a violent nature. They are afraid because they could do damage to themselves, because they won't take their medication, because they won't seek the treatment that they require. I think this initiative allows us to deal with this issue in a very serious way, and for that reason I hope the Legislature will agree to have this bill go forward to the justice committee for further discussion.

**Mr Allan K. McLean (Simcoe East):** I just want to comment briefly on the private member's bill that's before the House this morning. I've had many people come into my office raising this concern and I'm very pleased to see today that the issue is being raised. Maybe some members do not agree with the wording of the legislation, but the intent of what is being proposed is something we should be considering.

When I have people come to my office who have a family member and they really don't know what to do or how to handle them, it gives you great concern. I think that we have the opportunity to say a few words to put something in for the people, to bring this issue to light for some of these families that do need the help and assistance.

When I look at some of the categories within the bill and the ability to commit individuals to psychiatric facilities, how they do that, what the outcome of that will be and who's going to monitor it, it is a concern to us all. I think the availability is here today for some of us to say just briefly about the bill that's before us and I'm glad that the member has brought it forth for discussion.

**The Acting Speaker:** The member for Ottawa Centre has two minutes to respond.

**Mr Patten:** I want to acknowledge first off the points made by all the members, the members for Carleton East and St Catharines in our party, the members for Cochrane South and London Centre and also for Huron, Chatham-Kent and Simcoe East.

I know this is an extremely sensitive issue. I also know there are many people who are suffering, many families that are suffering at this stage because they cannot get treatment. My sole intent with this bill is not to loosen the criteria, as the member for London Centre said; not at all. It does not add any new rights for anybody. It does not deal with police detention. That's a completely different issue. Police detention is another issue. Nothing has been changed in the procedures of how people are brought to a psychiatric facility. It's an attempt to enable, appropriately, to have criteria that address and come into focus with so many people who need treatment.

I would be the first to rise up and yell from the rafters if people's human rights were denied under something that I looked at and proposed. I would never want to do that. I pride myself on having fought many times for people's rights. I also think there's a right to treatment. We have many ill people, and one of the unique functions of that illness is that they do not recognize their need. It's not like a cancer patient; it's not like somebody who has diabetes. As soon as they have that disease, they know they need treatment and they welcome the opportunity to be treated in a facility or in a hospital or whatever is appropriate.

1100

But I say to you that this is a very tough thing for many families. I am prepared to say I don't care what the drafting is; what I care about is, can we help those people out there now? While in some institutions they cannot get in immediately, I am told there still is some capacity. I have checked this out — I wouldn't do this lightly — and there is some capacity for treatment. In fact, the earlier we can treat people who really need it, the greater the likelihood that the treatment will be much shorter. The longer the duration of psychosis that goes on, especially for schizophrenics, the more difficult it is to treat and the longer it takes.

You have people now who pass the test because they're dangerous. Imagine living with a dangerous person in your family, or your neighbour or your partner in business or whatever it may be. It's a terrible thing. It's terrible for the individual who needs treatment and it's terrible for their family, their friends or their colleagues.

I say to you, whatever the wording should be, yes, I see adding a feature to appropriately allow us to treat people who need it. There will be many people who won't pass the test. It does not change the process or



deny rights. It simply says it enables people to see that somebody indeed has deteriorated, and they take that person to a psych hospital for assessment. Sometimes, as happens now, they're not accepted, and I imagine in the future, if they do not pass the test, they would not be accepted. Not only that, checks and balances of the review board are very stringent. I have case after case of people who have come forward and said, "I could have helped that individual, but I couldn't make the case that they were immediately dangerous to someone else, and because of that they didn't get the treatment." Then two months later they harm someone else, and I guess there is the proof in the pudding that that person needed that kind of support.

The importance of earlier treatment — and this is not a licence, it's not a slippery slope. I say to the member for Chatham-Kent, there are no new rights in this. If I follow the logic of your particular argument, then the doctors, the justices of the peace and the police should not even be in the picture.

I'd like to identify a reference in a letter from Dr Heather Milliken, a psychiatrist at the Royal Ottawa hospital, asking for an opinion related to this particular bill dealing with the importance of earlier treatment and the outcomes. She says: "The evidence is based on studies" —

**The Acting Speaker:** The member's time has expired.

#### VOICE MAIL

**Mr Bill Murdoch (Grey-Owen Sound):** I move private member's notice of motion number 37:

That in the opinion of this House, the Common Sense Revolution is promoting practical ideas for improving efficiency and making government work better for the people it serves; therefore the House strongly urges the government of Ontario to support the removal of voice mail from every provincial government telephone paid for by the taxpayers of Ontario.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson):** The member has 10 minutes.

**Mr Murdoch:** It is with great pleasure that I rise today to speak on this resolution. As you know, the 20th century is about to come to a close. The 20th century will be remembered for many of its advancements in technology that have made life easier and more enjoyable for all of us: inventions like the vehicle, the television, the computer and the telephone, just to name a few. But before we move ahead into the 21st century, I think it's necessary to take another look at the telephone.

Since its introduction, business people, politicians, friends and family have enjoyed the ability to talk to each other at the touch of a dial, and from almost anywhere in the world.

In the past, if you wanted to talk to someone in a provincial government office, you simply dialled the number. The receptionist would answer your call and direct you to the person you wanted to talk to. If that person wasn't in the office, the receptionist would take down a message and give it to that person when they returned, and they could phone you back.

However, this has all changed. A few years ago someone, who probably thought they were contributing to the

advancement of the telephone, introduced the invention called voice mail. At the time the inventor probably thought he or she was doing a good thing. In fact, what they introduced was the death of telephone communications as we knew it.

Nowadays, if you want to get hold of someone in a provincial government office you dial a number and many things can happen.

First, you can be put into a telephone directory where the cold voice of a computer lists a number of confusing options. You are instructed to pick one of the options and press the corresponding number. If you miss one of the options, you have to wait until they are repeated. If the list of options doesn't include your question or concern, you have the option of blindly hitting a number and pleading your case with anyone who may answer.

Second, if you're lucky enough to reach the right person but they aren't at their phone or are on the phone, you're thrown into the voice mail system again. You're left with a choice of leaving a message that may never be answered or hanging up and calling again.

These are just two of the examples that I'm sure a number of legislators and their constituents are familiar with. The voice mail system is not designed to benefit the caller. It is designed to benefit the end user.

Let me just say that I am not totally against voice mail. I do use it after hours in my office. But during the day people deserve to speak to a human being. This is a policy in my office.

The resolution I have put forward is a lot different than my original resolution. The original draft was watered down so much that those who know me may have thought I was losing my touch. I have therefore decided to include the meat of my resolution in the form of another of the 20th century's greatest inventions, a top 10 list. Therefore, it is my pleasure to introduce Bill Murdoch's top 10 reasons why the provincial government should pull the plug on voice mail:

(10) Rural and northern Ontario residents get whacked with long-distance charges every time they call Queen's Park. That's not fair.

(9) Voice mail promotes laziness. Even the most dedicated provincial employee is tempted to let a caller disappear into the voice mail abyss.

(8) If you are calling from a pay phone and get a voice mail you can kiss your quarter goodbye.

(7) After reports of my intention to recommend scrapping voice mail from all provincial government phones, my office was flooded with calls of support, all of which were politely answered by my staff and not a machine.

(6) A phone call to a provincial government office is a call to action, not a voice audition.

(5) Voice mail will change the course of history. Stevie Wonder will have to change the name of his Valentine's favourite to "I just called to say I love you, but I got your voice mail so we're through."

Viewers will be outraged when Steven Spielberg's re-releases ET because the poor little fellow phones home and gets voice mail, leaving him on earth to be dissected by evil scientists.



(4) If you have enough patience to listen to the message and press the right button, you may be told, "Sorry, mailbox full, please call again later."

(3) It's a big, fat waste of money. We will still have receptionists to answer the phone when callers hit zero.

(2) In the Common Sense Revolution the government promised practical ideas for making the government work better for the people it serves. Getting rid of voice mail would be a step in the right direction.

And the number one reason why the provincial government should pull the plug on voice mail: (1) The taxpayers of Ontario pay the salaries of all provincial civil servants, elected officials and their staff and therefore deserve to talk to a living, breathing human being when phoning a government office and not a machine.

For these reasons and many others, I'm strongly urging the House to support the removal of voice mail from every provincial government telephone paid for by the taxpayers of Ontario. The taxpayers are our customers and it's our job to listen. I don't know how anybody could disagree with this simple concept.

Voice mail should be left behind on the scrap heap of useless 20th-century inventions like the Rubik's cube, new Coke and spray-on hair. This is not a political issue. It's a matter of common sense. Let's get rid of voice mail before it's too late.

1110

As a young boy growing up in Grey county, I was taught that if someone was taking the time to ask you a question, it is only polite to answer them right away. This simple lesson should be applied to the telephone. If the phone rings, answer it. Don't hide behind the wall of voice mail.

I look forward to hearing from the rest of my colleagues in the House talking about this but I see I still have three minutes and my notes have run out, so I can talk about why I'm so irritated. It's annoying and we don't need this voice mail. That's why we have receptionists. I don't believe there's a ministry in this House that doesn't have a receptionist working for them. As I said before, in my office we don't have voice mail. If you ring my office and all my staff are on the phones, it will bounce to the receptionist at northern development and mines. She will take a message and make sure that my people get the message and hope that they will phone.

If you aren't fortunate enough to have a ministry to answer it, we do have in all our offices —

**Mr Frank Miclash (Kenora):** We don't have that option.

**Mr Murdoch:** I understand that I'm hearing from some of my colleagues across the floor that they don't, but they do have a caucus office. I have been in your caucus office and you should have your phones bounced back to that caucus office. When we were in opposition, that's what happened in our offices. We didn't need the voice mail.

I was irritated about this but I hadn't decided to do something until one day I was sitting in a staff office, staff working for our party, not for me but for our party, and we were talking about — I don't know what it was now we were talking about but it didn't matter, it was irrelevant. The phone rang and I said, "Aren't you going

to answer the phone?" and they said, "No, no, voice mail will get it," and that bugged me. That's what happened and I decided then that we had to do something about that, because that person on the other line wanted an answer, they didn't want some voice mail, something that wouldn't answer.

Not only in the province do we need to get rid of it but I think businesses should get rid of it. I can tell you right now, Mr Speaker, that my radio station in Owen Sound probably has one of the worst voice mails I've ever heard. If you try to get a reporter on the weekend, the first thing you get when you ring in, they say, "If you know the number of reporter, please dial." How are you supposed to know all their numbers? Then they tell you to spell their name, and I want to tell you now, there we get into trouble.

**Interjection:** Then you are in trouble.

**Mr Murdoch:** Then we are in trouble, that's right. First of all, if you don't have your glasses on, you can't read the numbers on the dial to find where they are. Second, you have to make sure you know how to spell and not everybody can do that. Curling would be an easy name, or Smith, but you could get some names — so when you start to spell the name, you get the voice mail back saying: "Sir, you obviously don't understand the system. Maybe you should hang up and try again." I'm telling you, business should be looking at this. I know if I was ordering something and I got voice mail, I certainly would be hanging up and going to a company that didn't use voice mail because it would be much more personal.

As I said, I'm going to look forward to hearing what the rest of my colleagues have to say and I hope you can support me in this bill.

**Mr Gilles E. Morin (Carleton East):** I will now add the seriousness to this resolution. Mr Murdoch's resolution gives me an opportunity to talk about my concerns about how our commitment to public service has deteriorated. Our colleague's resolution also gives us the chance to debate whether the technologies we've adopted really serve the public.

I think everyone would agree that automated phone systems have become an annoyance.

**Interjections.**

**The Acting Speaker:** I'd like order in the House. Mr Morin has the floor and the rest of the conversations will have to move outside.

**Mr Morin:** Would you start the clock again, Mr Speaker? I'd just like to tell my colleague Mr Murdoch from the riding of Grey-Owen Sound that there is a serious aspect about your resolution and I'd like to speak to it.

I think everyone would agree that automated phone systems have become an annoyance. Something that was supposed to simplify our lives has instead created a science fiction nightmare of a depopulated planet controlled by robots.

Maybe I am exaggerating, but it certainly is true that calling any business or government office has become an obstacle course of multiple choices, none of which are quite right for your purposes. A warm hello and a straightforward answer are the exception rather than the rule these days. We are trimming down government



operations in the name of efficiency. But what about effectiveness? Is saving money the only vision that guides your actions? Or is public service still something we can be proud to stand behind?

Although automated answering systems are an annoyance for everyone, they are especially an issue for seniors and other vulnerable people, like some in the disabled community. For people who were not raised with technology or those who are frustrated by complexities, there is much that is confusing and offputting when getting the runaround from a machine. Many simply give up.

I think we need to remember that regardless of economics, certain principles and basic rights apply, and these rights and principles are non-negotiable. We are in office by the grace of our electors, but our responsibility is to serve all the people of Ontario. Regardless of their situation, each of them has the right to a direct relationship with their government in whatever form serves them best.

I believe that politicians and bureaucrats are criticized in exact proportion to their indifference to the constituents they come in contact with. On each occasion that we in the public service treat a constituent with respect and courtesy, we improve the reputation of government as a whole.

As a former minister for seniors, I met with many wonderful and challenging and, yes, demanding seniors. As a minister without portfolio, I had little in the way of money to offer towards these projects. Nevertheless, they appreciated the interest, and I and others in my position showed to their concerns a great interest. My experience proved to me how important it is that the lines of communication remain open, both with interest groups and with individuals.

To raise a side issue but still a relevant one, it is my opinion that the previous government's decision to disband the office for seniors' issues was a real mistake. Advocacy is a big part of our work, but to really understand people's concerns, you have to get close to them and the office gave the signal that the government was listening. In its time the ministry, the 1-800 line, was receiving 15,000 calls a year and each call was dealt with personally.

Whatever reorganized system we finally end up with, we must be careful not to create a Fortress Ontario to defend us against the very people we are meant to serve. To understand things we've never experienced is almost impossible; to not even try is inexcusable.

The office for seniors issues offered a program that was incredibly valuable called Through Other Eyes. It allowed participants to experience at first hand some of the disabilities that seniors and others must live with every day. I must tell you going through the experience really opened my eyes. The frustrations of having to deal with your own limitations and then adding the frustration of dealing with a convoluted government information system would drive you right round the bend.

Listen to this: There was an idea a few years ago to simplify the organization of the blue pages so that people looking for government information could more easily find it: a simple idea, a good idea. The idea was killed because there was a fear that we wouldn't be able to

meet the demand, that too many people would now know where to find us. What a thought.

This government is determined to see us as a business. Whether that approach is correct or not continues to be debated. However, if we accept the basic premise and conduct the business of government in a businesslike fashion, we must pay attention to customer service, and as one financial services giant says, "One customer at a time."

Mr Murdoch's resolution deserves our support as a way to let the people of Ontario know that the government of Ontario is open for business, and that means their business, once again.

1120

**Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South):** I'm pleased to be able to have the opportunity to speak in favour of this motion, but I want to put it out for the record: I am not a Luddite. I need to put that clearly on the record. I think I'm known as the technological guy of the caucus who drives his staff crazy at all hours of the day and night with e-mail messages and all kinds of fancy-dancy little things that we can do on computers, but I've got to say that I agree with the member.

The big issue here is that often, not only within government but within the private sector, incoming lines where the public is trying to get hold of somebody for a particular service are greeted by a voice mail system. I'll just give you the example of a couple of situations I've had to experience over the last little while.

A constituent called me, I guess some time in January, and said, "I was trying to get hold of somebody in the Ministry of Education." It was a fairly serious complaint. The system they had there was not only voice mail; it was like a call-screening system so that when you call up the individual it says, "Who do you want to speak to?" and you press the particular number — they give you a directory — so you get to the person responsible for the particular complaint. Then when you get there you're supposed to leave a little message saying who you are and what your complaint is about.

This poor individual would call, I believe it was the Ministry of Education, and say, "I'm calling about this particular thing," and from the tone of his voice the person at the end figured out that this person obviously was somewhat upset. Needless to say, nobody ever answered the phone. Finally, what this guy did was, I said, "Call them up and say you're calling to congratulate them on a wonderful initiative," and bang, the phone was picked up right away. That's how they got on that one. So I've got to agree that sometimes those phone systems are used for the darndest things.

The other one I had was about two or three weeks ago, and this one drove me crazy. I was up in Timmins and there's a 10 o'clock and 11 o'clock flight on Monday mornings back into Toronto from Timmins. I was booked on the 10 o'clock and my constituency appointment was running later than normal; a particular individual had a problem. I needed to call in to Air Ontario to rebook my time so I could go back out at 11. They've just introduced this system where you call in and they say, "Welcome to Air Ontario; your call is important to us," and they went on to give me about 27 different choices



of what I had to press to get what I wanted. By the time I actually figured out all the buttons I needed to press because the whole rigamarole was quite incomprehensible, I missed my flight. No kidding.

It took me 15 minutes to work my way through that one and one of them was, "If you know the flight you're on, please press in the flight number." Well, who knows what flight number they're on? You've got an open ticket is how we travel. I had to listen to all the different cities coming up and all the different times — I'm telling you, it was more complicated than it needed to be. I ended up coming here at 2 instead of 11 o'clock.

The point I'm trying to make here is that I wish this motion could go further than just the government. We need to get into the private sector and give them a little bit of common sense. My God, some of that voice mail system is something. I think one of the worst ones I had —

**Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Community and Social Services):** You used the words "common sense."

**Mr Bisson:** They need a bit of common sense in the private sector, I'll tell you. The one I had that I thought was really ironic was the company I had that did the servicing of my computer network. I finally don't deal with them any more because I got so frustrated with their voice mail system.

One day we were having a printing problem. I called up and the voice mail said: "If you know the type of problem you have, please press one of the following options. If you have a networking problem, press 1. If you have a printing-faxing problem, press 2. If you have a computer problem, press 3." Was the printing problem because of the printer, the computer or the networking? I figured it was the printer and I'd press printer. I finally got to that and he says, "Oh, no, you've got to get the networking guy." Needless to say, they're not around any more. I thought it was kind of weird anyway for a computer company to be doing that.

I say to the member for Grey-Owen Sound, I support generally the motion you're bringing forward. I only want to put this one caveat. I think voice mail is a good tool, if properly used. I think voice mail is fine for within the bureaucracy. If I'm trying to get hold of your private line, the member for Grey-Owen Sound, and you're not around and I want to leave some detailed message, I would still like to have the ability to call up the member for Grey-Owen Sound, his own personal, private voice mail system, where I can say: "Hey, Bill, something's going on and here are the details. Would you get back to me."

Often staff are very pressed these days because there's very little of them around. For them to be able to get the information correctly to the individual sometimes is a problem. Voice mail is a useful tool if properly used, but I certainly suggest that the member's going in the right direction in saying we should eliminate voice mail from the face of the public. The interface between the public and the civil service, and the public and businesses should be: We reach a receptionist or we reach whoever the person is who is responsible, to take our inquiry. There's nothing more frustrating.

Did you ever try to call the family support plan line? That one takes the cake. Anybody got the number? We'll

print it. If you want to see something that's in total disarray, never mind the system, call that number, that constituency help number they give us — unbelievable. I've got constituents, I bet you have the same, who literally, for days, sit by the phone and ring and ring and keep on calling. They never get through.

**Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold):** If you try to go in person, they bust you.

**Mr Bisson:** If you try to go in person, the Attorney General says, "I'm going to give you a charge of common assault." Maybe Peter should have been using the voice mail. It's quite the thing and I've literally got, as I'm sure you all do as members of this assembly, constituents who are trying to find out what's happened to their cheque from three months ago that they didn't get. They've got no money from the family support plan for the last three or four months. They're at their wits' end because they can't pay their bills and here they are trying to call into the system and they can't even get the stupid voice mail to activate itself because it never answers at the other end.

If you're going to start this, I hope the very first place we take the voice mail off is the family support plan lines. We need to put some human beings at the end of those ones.

I would just say, in the final minute I have — because I know the member for Welland-Thorold, who has lots of experience with the family support lines, would like to speak to this issue — that one of the realities is this government has laid off many employees within the civil service. I hope, if you're talking about getting rid of the voice mail system, it's going to mean we will have the bodies there to be able to answer those particular lines.

One of the reasons we're using voice mail is because there's not enough staff within the civil service. The government is trying to make itself more efficient, so the government tells us, because I've inquired about this before, and one of the ways it did that was lay off a whole bunch of people and it's using voice mail systems in a vengeance. The reality is that one of the reasons we have all this voice mail is the government has laid off most of the staff, in some ministries over 50% of the staff, like MNR and MTO; there are a lot fewer employees there to deal with inquiries.

The other thing I would say to the member for Grey-Owen Sound in closing is simply this: I really appreciate when I see a member on the other side decide to be a little bit the maverick within his own caucus, but I think, Bill, you've got to come out of the closet, you've got to go a little bit further. It's one thing to come forward with this motion to draw attention to an issue that's a thorn in the side, but we're looking for your support, Bill. This side of the House and the opposition is looking for your support in being the maverick you truly are on a number of particular pieces of legislation that I know for a fact you don't support. I hope to hear a little bit more about that later.

**Mr Bob Wood (London South):** I rise in my capacity as skunk at the garden party to give the Management Board point of view on this matter.

*Interjections.*

**Mr Bob Wood:** Being encouraged by this response, I'll sit down right now.



The Management Board agrees with the complaints that have been offered by members from all sides of the House, but we see the solution as not being to get rid of the technology, but to make the technology serve the people. We would like to point out that voice mail is essential to the productivity and cost-savings that the voters have made clear they expect us to deliver, along with good customer service.

We currently have over 25,000 voice mail boxes, used by individual government staff. Using voice mail, a typical government office with 200 staff and four receptionists could save more than \$100,000 or 80% on message-taking costs. The cost of voice mail at \$8 per line is only a small fraction of the cost of full-time receptionists, who often earn more than \$30,000 a year plus benefits at the Ontario public service rates.

While voice mail is occasionally a nuisance, it can also reduce the cost of phone tag by allowing for detailed messages and responses, rather than second- and third-hand messages that can easily be garbled in transmission. There are also more than 400 audio text information mailboxes which provide prerecorded program information. Most of these provide toll-free service for long-distance callers. Technology also allows for the renewal over the phone of thousands of routine transactions and licences, saving taxpayers time and money.

1130

The biggest criticism often made of automated communication systems is that they don't always have the kinds of human backup systems that may be necessary when our constituents' inquiries don't fit into a particular bureaucratic pigeonhole. Government is committed to improving its communication systems and, wherever possible, to ensuring there is a real, live human being available to back up the system when various forms of automation will not provide adequate service. In short, the Management Board believes, "If you can't fight 'em, join 'em."

The answer to the very legitimate concerns of the member for Grey-Owen Sound and others is to make voice mail work for the people. We understand that a good number of members may well vote for this resolution in frustration. We personally do not support it because we feel the answer is to make the system work for the people rather than getting rid of a system that can do a lot of good for all. We can provide better service at less cost, and surely that's the bottom line.

**Mr Alvin Curling (Scarborough North):** The member for London South sounds to me like a voice mail from Management Board.

With regard to the private member's bill, the resolution that my colleague from Grey-Owen Sound has put forward, I just want to say to him, let's get to the root of it. Cutbacks hurt ordinary people, and the basis of it all is that maybe it is not voice mail that's causing the problem, but the cutbacks that are happening. I had hoped, of course, as they say, the maverick that he is, that he would come forward today with a resolution talking about the hospital cuts that are happening right in his riding, that are causing havoc in his own area.

In my constituency office in Scarborough North, I get about three or four calls per day, and sometimes I

average about 20 calls, complaining about voice mail: that no one answers it, or leaving messages that are not returned. My colleague just mentioned the family support plan, now known as the Family Responsibility Office, that does not respond to anything anyhow; either the phone is busy, as he said, or, if you actually get through to a voice mail and are able to leave a message, no one returns the call. The bottom line is there is no one there to return the call. Cutbacks hurt.

The Trillium drug plan is another complaint I get. One constituent called to say that a number was busy so he used the Bell call return service, at a cost to him of about 50 cents to use it. You get that when the line is available. When he eventually got through, he went through the automated messages, but when he finally had the chance to transfer to an operator, the line was disconnected. Again, it doesn't work.

OSAP: that's the one that really floors you. These calls are about \$2, as they are 1-900 numbers. That's \$2 a shot. These are students who have been having cutbacks because of this government not putting enough money in education, so some students maybe go broke just trying to get through to OSAP. Eventually, when they get the money, I'm sure the money they get from OSAP will be paid towards Bell Canada for the \$2 call.

MTHA, the Metropolitan Toronto Housing Authority: Forget that. They only answer the phone between 8:30 and 10, so the phone is always busy. When you get through, you get a call that tells you that the time you can call is between 8:30 and 10; the voice mail tells you that also. You get in touch with no one, no one whatever, because the voice mail is the one that blocks you.

The welfare office: Generally the voice mail service and the bureaucracy actually completely ignores people. Just try to get through to the welfare office. I haven't got the privilege like the member for Grey-Owen Sound, who flips his calls over to northern development, to the ministry. I would like to flip my calls over to colleges and universities and let some of those bureaucrats answer it, but again, they're cutting back on the bureaucrats.

The root of the problem is cutbacks, because as the voice mail from London South stated — sorry, the member for London South stated — basically the bottom line is the thing we should deal with. Forget about people; let's save some money. As a matter of fact, I am asking all the people from Scarborough North if they could move out of there so it could be easier for me to deal with people, because this government feels that is the best way to run a government: without people.

**Mr Kormos:** Bill Murdoch, the member for Grey-Owen Sound, has from time to time revealed himself to be a voice in the wilderness, in that vast Tory backbench wilderness, as he does today in raising this issue of voice mail. It was several weeks ago when the member approached me with his concept for this resolution and I said, "Billy, I'm with you." Because I thought, here we are, we've got a Tory backbencher prepared to drive a stake in the heart of this vampire of a government. But he tempers his resolution, because he's currying favour now. On the one hand, he wants to be a maverick, and I understand that. There's great pride to be had from standing up and speaking out, as Bill Murdoch has from



time to time. I'm going to support this resolution because I told him I was and because the thrust of the resolution is sound. But he prefaces it by actually suggesting that the Common Sense Revolution is promoting practical ideas for improving efficiency and making government work better.

Billy, you didn't say that to the Minister of Education when he was fouling up the educational system up in Grey-Owen Sound, when you rejected that as anything akin to efficient or making government work better. Billy, you didn't say that when you criticized the process when they were going to shut down, and they are going to shut down, the jail up in your riding and terminate the jobs of those hardworking correctional officers, and in so many other private conversations we've had, member for Grey-Owen Sound, and we'll keep them private. I wouldn't want to jeopardize the member's stature in his caucus and in the eyes of his leader by speaking publicly about those many private conversations.

I'm proud to join with the member for Grey-Owen Sound. My colleague declared himself not to be a Luddite. I tell you, voice mail is a scam. Mr Wood here, with his defence of the ministry of government services, of Management Board, was passionate. We saw the sweat on his brow as his enthusiasm for his support of the government's position and the support of voice mail was mounting and rising, and the tone and tenor of his voice revealed in a way that might have embarrassed him a little bit the extreme passion with which he defended the government against this attack by its maverick back-bencher.

I say Mr Murdoch's right. The problem is —

**The Acting Speaker:** I'd just like to remind the member for Welland-Thorold that it's parliamentary to refer to members by their riding names.

**Mr Kormos:** Thank you, Speaker. You can call me Mr Kormos if you wish.

The member for Grey-Owen Sound omits comment on who's going to answer the phones. This government has destroyed the civil service in this province. They've terminated the jobs of thousands and thousands and thousands of hardworking civil servants who, yes, among other things used to answer phones and respond personally to people's problems. Mention has been made of the shutdown of eight regional offices of the family support plan and the termination of approximately 290 competent, hardworking staff people there who resolved issues when women and their kids had problems getting their FSP payments.

Mr Murdoch is right: Voice mail is an irritant. It's frustrating. Quite frankly, it's accessible only when you have push-button phones. The reality is that with the growing poverty in this province, especially among seniors, among the disabled, more and more people are going to be disinclined to pay that usurious surcharge that Bell and their mob impose for having push-button, touch-tone phones.

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As well, we've got to be careful because this government has become very selective about whom it listens to. We've heard mention of the way in which callers are screened. Mention was made to me by a number of

members of the public about the fact that for some people voice mail gives them an opportunity to not perhaps be screened out of the picture by a partisan receptionist. There should perhaps be an option. People should be entitled to choose whether they want to talk to a real, live person or whether they want to enjoy the anonymity of the machinery.

I'm interested in seeing how the vote breaks down on this. If Mr Murdoch's resolution passes, I expect every member of his caucus who supported it to be unending in their efforts to ensure that Premier Harris and his cabinet — the real test here is not whether the resolution passes, but whether Mike Harris listens. Or does he, as with megacity, prefer to turn away and ignore the plea of the people and of elected representatives?

Mr Murdoch, member for Grey-Owen Sound, I wish you well in this effort. I look forward to you getting the keys to the executive washroom, along with the keys to a Chevy Impala and a driver, as you join the members of your caucus who are blessed with cabinet positions. Lord knows, you'd be one heck of an Attorney General, one in whom I'd have far more confidence than the current Attorney General. I'm going to support this resolution. I hope others do too.

**Mr John O'Toole (Durham East):** It's a pleasure today to stand to participate in the resolution by Mr Murdoch, the member for Grey-Owen Sound. I'll share my time with the other members. I know I'm interfering, but I just wanted to commend the member for Grey-Owen Sound for a great speech in support of the non-use of voice mail systems.

It might be interesting if members realize that last night on the CBC Joe Schlesinger commented, and there was quite an extensive report, on the resurgence of opposition to voice mail, not just in the government, but also in the private sector.

Just one comment: I think people in government are working there to serve people, and when people call, generally, they have something they're calling about. They're usually upset or concerned or looking for a service. The last thing they need is somebody with voice mail to give them the runaround. I'll be supporting the member's resolution this morning and look forward to hearing other comments.

**Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury):** I'm pleased to rise today to speak to this resolution put forward by the independent-thinking member for Grey-Owen Sound. I find that this resolution is very interesting, if not curious, primarily because of its wording and the conundrum it creates. The conundrum lies in the fact that this resolution should really be split into two: one which I find very compelling and the other which I find quite offensive.

The section which I can't support in principle or in intent, or any other way, is the section which claims, "That in the opinion of this House, the Common Sense Revolution is promoting practical ideas for improving efficiency and making government work better for the people it serves." Tell that to the mothers and children who continue to suffer through the family support plan. Tell that to those people who are waiting for heart surgery, who are trying to get a bed so that they can be serviced properly with a health care system that cares.



Tell that to the students who are in the gallery today or the students in Grey-Owen Sound who are concerned about their education. In fact, the member is quite concerned about their education as well. Tell that to the people in Sudbury or in Grey-Owen Sound who have found that their hospitals have been closed. Tell that to the people who are occupying the presidents' offices at the University of Toronto and York. Tell them that this is a government that is promoting better ideas for better service.

That's only one side of the coin. The other side is that there is of course very good reason for supporting this resolution, that is, the section that proposes to remove voice mail from every provincial government telephone paid for by the taxpayers of Ontario: This would give the government the chance to restore some of the many public service jobs which it cut in the past year and a half.

If we could get rid of voice mail, then perhaps we could restore some of the people to the family support plan offices in Sudbury and the other seven regions that were closed. As a result, the women and children of my community and all over Ontario could finally get some answers when they try to call the ministry and could actually start receiving their money.

We could also restore some of the citizens in other ministries, citizens who, when they had their jobs, were taxpayers, contributing to provincial programs as well as strengthening local businesses and local economies as they spent their earnings, instead of being targeted as surplus or redundant by this government. We could restore some of the 83 individuals cut from the Ministry of Northern Development and Mines whom the independent-thinking parliamentary assistant is so concerned about; or the whopping 1,820 people who have lost their jobs in the Ministry of Environment and Energy; cuts which have left these ministries without strategies or directions, which have abandoned the north and the rest of Ontario and left future generations to deal with the outcomes of this lost investment.

If getting rid of voice mail in government means putting people back to work and is a means of ending the government's automated, churned-out, push-button approach to governing, which shows no regard for the real citizens of this province and the real effects that cutbacks are having on their lives, then please let's get rid of voice mail. Let's start listening to Ontarians and let's start hearing the many ways that programs this government is doing, this group of 82, are hurting the people of Ontario, are out of touch with the people of Ontario.

The independent-thinking member for Grey-Owen Sound will have my support on this resolution because I know he's independent enough to know that he wants jobs restored. He doesn't follow the government line: the Common Sense Revolution. He wants, as we in the opposition want, an Ontario that cares for Ontarians, an Ontario that has compassion, that has fairness, that has balance, that has justice.

**Mr Allan K. McLean (Simcoe East):** It's a pleasure for me to rise and speak on my colleague from Grey-Owen Sound's resolution, which directs the government

to remove voice mail from every provincial government telephone paid for by the taxpayers of Ontario. I personally thank the member for Grey-Owen Sound for finally voicing the thoughts and grumblings echoed quietly in the hollowed halls of government offices and constituents' homes.

I have heard the telephone receivers in my offices being slammed firmly into their cradles, followed by impolite words of disappointment from my staff members when they call government offices. In the process of performing their required job tasks, my staff often find themselves needing assistance from a ministry office only to find they're halted by a recorded telephone message saying the person being called is unable to take the call at this time. The message never says at what time they will be able to take the call.

Following the procedure of leaving a voice mail can feel like sending a message into the outer realms of the universe. The response time to this electronic communication usually tends to confirm this out-of-Earth experience.

Not only do I and my staff find voice mail an annoyance, but we also receive many complaints from constituents who hit the so-called brick wall of communication when they phone a government office. We did promise to cut the red tape in our 1995 campaign and we did promise a smaller government. Those promises we are actively now working on. I'm just wondering if in our zest to cut the red tape we may have cut the communication lines under the tape and if in our zest for a smaller government we have shrunk the mantle of service to the people of Ontario.

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The taxpayers of this province are paying for a service, and I use the word "service" cautiously, which offers little or no service at all. The only people voice mail services are the people who use the telephone system to screen their calls. Voice mail can be a useful tool in allowing someone to leave a message after hours. Unfortunately, it is not being used as intended. Instead of being used as an instrument of assistance, it is being used to block access to assistance.

Just this week, my staff member called seven numbers in a ministry office, and of those seven numbers she never did get anybody to talk to, only voice mail. We find that unacceptable, the constituents find it unacceptable and that's why I believe this resolution is before us today. I think you could call the workers in that office selective in who they wanted to talk to. They misuse the voice mail to select the job they feel like doing.

This work habit is neither practical nor efficient. It is certainly not making government work better for the people it serves. Perhaps in this age of technology and communication which allows us to view Jupiter and talk to space travellers we have lost touch with our own government office community and the constituents we work for. There's nothing any more inconvenient than calling and getting voice mail.

I'll give you an experience that I had in my own riding. The private sector should be made aware of this and I understand that there are some in the private sector who have done away with voice mail and their business



has substantially increased because of that. I had the occasion on a Saturday morning — I'm not sure what I wanted — to phone a business to find out if they had the product I was looking for. I got voice mail. I phoned another business. Somebody answered the phone and I asked them if they had what I was wanting. They had it and I went and purchased the product at that store. So I say to those businesses that have voice mail, if you think it's to your advantage, I'm telling you today it's to your disadvantage.

The problems we have in government, when my staff call to try and solve complaints, it doesn't matter what ministry it is, they seem to be getting the same voice mail. I say to you today, to those people in those offices, that voice mail is there for a purpose. It will never be done away with, in my opinion, but I think that you've got to accept that we've got to make it work a lot better. I do not have voice mail in any of the three offices I have. When you phone my offices, you get to talk to an individual. That's the way I want it and that's the way my constituents want it.

It's confusing, and to us we find it unacceptable, to call a ministry office and continually not get to speak to the individual we want. As I said, earlier this week one of my staff called a ministry office, seven different lines, and got a voice mail on every one. The people of this province do not accept that; neither do I. I commend the member for Grey-Owen Sound for bringing this resolution forward today.

**Mr Jim Brown (Scarborough West):** I support the resolution to remove voice mail from provincial government phones. Voice mail is the bureaucrat's best weapon in the battle against public service: voice mail, the inhuman response to citizens with problems; voice mail, not the efficient administrative procedure but a bureaucratic put-off and put-down to those in need. The proliferation of voice mail in the government is a clear indication that bureaucrats are interested in anything but talking to those who pay them and whom they supposedly serve.

The use of voice mail dates back far beyond our present government. I have many constituents who require assistance from the government: single moms who have been evicted, disabled who have a question about a government program, seniors inquiring about drugs. They call me because after repeated calls to the bureaucrats all they get is voice mail. The trouble is that my office makes the same calls and gets the same voice mail. So there are half a dozen unanswered calls from my distressed constituent and probably 10 unanswered calls from my angry staff. I am certain that these same bureaucrats claim that they are so busy because their voice mail has 16 calls. Yes, 16 calls one way, all about the same problem. I can't say that's efficient and I can't say that's customer service.

Commercial voice mail was introduced in 1980. It's a multibillion-dollar industry that has an annual growth rate of over 20%. The impersonal world of government bureaucracy has been rejuvenated by voice mail. Voice mail has become the nirvana of those who practise procrastination, doing nothing and hoping the problem will go away. Government bureaucracies are champions of index-finger development: Keep dialling, keep follow-

ing those instructions and maybe you'll get through. Calling a government office is like buying a lottery ticket — you may just win. Hope springs eternal.

The voice mail industry has developed an entire body of knowledge around answers that are typical when voice mail kicks in. These multiple-choice questions that the machine asks are difficult and nearly impossible for my constituents, many of whom are ethnically diverse with too poor a grasp of English to understand all the instructions. It's not fair for anyone to be taken down the garden path of a voice mail inquiry, only to have to repeat the procedure because you got on the wrong submenu or branch. "Please hang up and try your call again" — these eight precious words are what you hear after spending five minutes listening to a voice mail directory or pressing buttons to answer many questions about the nature of your call.

Voice mail is the ultimate government bureaucratic tool. It covers for smoke breaks, arriving too late, leaving too early or those long coffee breaks. That's wrong. Bureaucrats are not doing their jobs and are hiding behind voice mail. Good government is not voice mail government. People expect an answer. People want to be treated with respect and they don't want to talk to a machine.

No one would contemplate talking to a machine to order a McDonald's hamburger. One of the biggest promoters of voice mail, Bell Telephone, has real people talking on their customer service lines. Service companies and all successful companies must provide a service and voice mail is not that.

Where would FedEx be if they used voice mail? In fact, the president of FedEx, Fred Smith, answers his own phone, and many top executives do the same to maintain contact with the people in the marketplace. Companies that service and care provide real people to talk to real people. Order a pizza, book a hotel, call a cab, call my office, you talk to real humans. Call the government and you start a voice mail journey.

North York Mayor Mel Lastman dislikes voice mail so much, he banned it in his office. He got calls from around the world, from as far away as Australia. He got overwhelming support for the idea.

Voice mail contradicts the basic rules of customer service. It treats people like nothing. It shows no respect for their time and their needs. It ignores compassion. It depersonalizes. It delays charity and help to all but the unrelenting. Voice mail's a personal attack on seniors, the young, the disabled and the most vulnerable. It has no heart, and I deplore that.

Make people responsible for their jobs. Don't trap people in voice mail jail.

**Mr John R. Baird (Nepean):** I'd just like to rise to compliment my good friend the member for Grey-Owen Sound on an excellent initiative designed to help push forward good government public policy, to help push forward customer service. I know there's a growing number in the public who are very concerned about this issue and I commend him for bringing forward this resolution.

**The Acting Speaker:** The member for Grey-Owen Sound has two minutes.



**Mr Murdoch:** I would like to thank all the members who spoke here today in support of it: the members for Ottawa East, Cochrane South — and we may mention something about the member for Cochrane South. He mentioned that I was a maverick. I don't know, maybe that's what he thinks, but I like to think that I'm just a member like everyone else and I bring the truth to this House that my constituents want me to bring here. Regardless of whether it's party policy or not, I represent my constituents. I just want to remind the member for Cochrane South of that.

Also, the members for Welland-Thorold, Scarborough East, Scarborough North — Scarborough is certainly out here today helping me out — and Simcoe East, and certainly my member for Sudbury, we have lots of good discussions. I also want to mention the member for London South. I know it was quite a speech when he mentioned that he was the skunk in the House. I do get that scent coming from you, that you weren't too interested in speaking today. I know what you have to do sometimes as a parliamentary assistant and I appreciate the fact that you're here.

I also have a letter I'd like to read into the House that was sent to me. It says: "Dear Bill: I am sorry I cannot join the voice mail debate tomorrow due to a prior commitment at my constituency office. However, I want to tell you in no uncertain terms that I strongly support your resolution. My constituents in rural eastern Ontario are increasingly fed up with what I call 'voice mail hell.'" That's from Sean Conway.

It's unfortunate some other members weren't here to speak on this. But again, I want to tell you that after hours it's okay, but during working hours people have to learn to answer that phone. It needs to be answered because people out there want to talk to real people. That's the only way we can solve some of the problems and get solutions that we need to help us in these times that we're in. If they don't answer that phone, then I don't think they should be working for us. That's what the phones are there for. The phones are there for communication, not the voice mail. I don't mind it after hours because there's no one there. At least the people know that when some voice mail comes on and says, "Sorry, these are the office hours."

I'm pleased with all the support we've had here today and hopefully the government will listen to us.

#### MENTAL HEALTH AMENDMENT ACT, 1997

#### LOI DE 1997 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LA SANTÉ MENTALE

**The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson):** We will deal first with ballot item number 63.

If there are any members who are against a vote at this time, they will please rise.

Mr Patten has moved second reading of Bill 111. Is it the wish of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

I declare the motion carried.

**Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre):** Mr Speaker, I'd like to refer the bill to the justice committee.

**The Acting Speaker:** Is the majority of the House in favour of the member's request to send the bill to the justice committee? Is it agreed?

All those in favour, please rise and remain standing. You may take your seats. A majority of the House is in favour.

The bill stands referred to the justice committee.

#### VOICE MAIL

**The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson):** We will now deal with ballot item number 64.

If there any members who are against taking a vote on this at this time, they will please rise.

Mr Murdoch has moved ballot item number 64. Is it the wish of the House that the resolution carry?

I declare it carried.

It being 12 o'clock, this House stands adjourned until 1:30 this afternoon.

*The House recessed from 1204 to 1330.*

#### MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

##### NORTHWESTERN ONTARIO

**Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury):** On February 3, the council of Terrace Bay passed the following resolution:

"Be it resolved that the Thunder Bay District League enter into negotiations with the province of Manitoba with a view to having northwestern Ontario become a part of Manitoba...."

In his letter of explanation, Reeve Ziegler says, "Council has become increasingly concerned about measures taken by the government of Ontario without consideration for the costs incurred by northwestern Ontario municipalities in their operations."

He goes on, "The failure of the provincial government to recognize that we have different needs...has resulted in the removal of tax dollars from our residents and communities for...necessities...removal of tax dollars from the north that have been generated from northern businesses, industries and residents."

Premier, are you not concerned that a municipality in Ontario would want to leave this great province? Could it be that the direction you and your government are going in is incorrect? Municipalities from all across the province are beginning to see what it will cost them after your dumping exercise. The reeve of Terrace Bay has pleaded with you and this government to change direction. Let's hope that the actions of Terrace Bay are not a sign of things to come in this province. Reeve Ziegler wants you to listen. Call him, please.

##### MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

**Mr Rosario Marchese (Fort York):** Mr Speaker, as you know, we're having hearings on the abominable Bill 103, an act to extirpate local government here in Metropolitan Toronto.

What you have noticed, no doubt, is quite a number of people who have come in front of this committee who are very passionate, who have been very effective in their



presentations and very well researched and have come to tell the members of that Conservative Party sitting on the opposite side of where we're at that what this government is doing with Bill 103 is fundamentally wrong. They are giving evidence, testimony, as to why local government works best and why in altering that it would affect fundamental values that are important to them.

They have said that there has been no evidence whatsoever to suggest that getting rid of local government is the better way to go, that all the researchers who have looked at this matter have proven beyond a reasonable doubt that there are no economic savings and that it alters fundamentally the values that people strongly support. Professor Sancton and Professor Kitchen, and Mr Cox from the US as well, state that.

The bill is fundamentally flawed and it cannot be amended or reformed. So even though M. Leach might amend that act that speaks about the power of trustees, I am not certain that is going to satisfy us, because the bill is the thing that's got to go.

### CURLING CHAMPIONSHIPS

**Mrs Brenda Elliott (Guelph):** Start with ice. Pebbled ice. Add brooms, stones, a skip, sweepers, and follow the action. Of course, I'm talking about curling. The noble sport of Scots was first introduced in Canada in 1760 by the 78th Fraser Highland Regiment soldiers.

Last week, the city of Guelph and the Guelph Curling Club played host to the Nokia Cup, the Ontario men's curling championship. The history of our Guelph club dates back to 1838, shortly after John Galt chopped down the first tree. Curling was played on Allan's Dam, Goldie's Dam, or wherever ice could be found.

The Nokia Cup brought together the finest curlers in Canada, names like Werenich, Howard and Middaugh, and more than 18,000 fans visited Guelph to watch these living legends play. The championship game last Sunday was exciting. Two-time world championship winner Ed Werenich played against Middaugh, and the two teams battled back and forth until Middaugh was finally over- come in the end and Werenich won 7-6.

The Nokia Cup is over, but the memories created in Guelph as the host city will last for a long time. We would like to congratulate Ed Werenich and wish him luck with his team in the Canadian Brier. We look forward to having the Nokia Cup and all the curling fans back to Guelph.

### TEACHER-STAFF APPRECIATION WEEK

**Mrs Lyn McLeod (Fort William):** An interesting missive made its appearance in the media rooms of Queen's Park today. It's a press release outlining the Minister of Education's tribute to teachers and staff in education.

February 9 to 15 is Teacher-Staff Appreciation Week in Canada. I guess the minister or somebody on his staff felt that due recognition of that fact should be made before the week is out.

The press release states, "During Teacher-Staff Appreciation Week, it's important to say 'Thank you, we appreciate your service in education.'" All of us who

believe in the importance of education and who understand the impact on the lives of young people of teachers and of staff in education do appreciate the work that's done and the dedication that is brought to that work.

Why is it that these words, delivered by way of a quietly dropped pro forma press release, ring so hollow coming from this minister?

Maybe it's because teachers and other staff don't believe this minister really appreciates their work and their dedication. How can teachers feel appreciated when the minister is doing his best to convince people that the system is broken, that our students are doing so badly that we have a crisis that needs radical change in response?

No wonder, as the press release says, that teachers and education staff are carrying out their work in an environment of change. How is bringing in legislation that advocates privatizing, outsourcing what other staff do, showing appreciation for educational staff?

What about the guidance teachers and the librarians and the custodial staff and the bus drivers and the teacher support staff, all of whom are targeted by this minister for cutting? Where is the appreciation for them? Actions speak louder than words.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin):** I would ask the members to keep their conversations as quiet as possible so that I can hear.

### MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

**Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale):** Last night I attended two meetings on megacity, one of which was in East York. Attending that meeting was Mr John Parker, who represents York East, and the Honourable Dave Johnson, who represents Don Mills. There were about 300 people in that crowd. I have to tell you that what unfolded was pretty sad.

I have attended a lot of megacity meetings now and I have seen a lot of anger and a lot of concern and a lot of the mood to fight back, but I haven't seen before what I saw last night. In this world of partisan politics you'd think I'd feel happy about it, but I don't.

I saw almost 300 people portraying hurt and a sense of betrayal time and time again, and deep anger at Mr Johnson for his role in this megacity. I think the Premier and the municipal affairs minister should be aware of what this misguided bill is doing to one of their most respected and honourable members.

Mr Johnson is a smart man. I know from listening to him that he cannot possibly believe some of the things he has to say himself about the so-called benefits of this megacity. I would ask this government, if for nobody else's sake, for one of their respected members' sake, to withdraw this bill.

### ALTA WHITFIELD

**Mr R. Gary Stewart (Peterborough):** I am deeply saddened to rise in the House to honour the passing of a strong community leader and a great educator from my riding last week. The late Alta Whitfield symbolized all that is good in people. Her dedication to her community,



to her students, to her family will always be cherished and never forgotten by the people she touched.

Alta was a very politically active individual. She was reeve of the township of North Monaghan for five years and served as Peterborough county councillor for eight years. She also served as the president of the Peterborough Progressive Conservative Riding Association.

Alta also knew the importance of serving your community by volunteering. She was chair of the VON, she was a key person in the creation of the hospital foundation, she served on Civic Hospital's board for some 20 years and was its chair, and was very active in Knox United Church.

She graduated from Peterborough teachers' college in the 1930s. She taught a family business course at Sir Sandford Fleming College in 1978, and in 1978 was the recipient of the college's fellowship in applied education. Alta strongly believed that you were never too old to continue your education.

On behalf of myself and all of my constituents in the Peterborough riding, I send my regrets and deepest condolences to the Whitfield family.

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#### PLANT CLOSURE

**Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East):** I rise today in the House to bring forward the issue of the closing of the Consumers Glass plant in the city of Hamilton in my riding of Hamilton East. The closing of this plant will affect 400 people. This company at one time was the largest glassmaker in the country with over 2,000 employees. As of May 7, the company will have shut its doors and 400 employees will be out of work. It is a tragedy for my community, it is a tragedy for the economy of Hamilton-Wentworth but, more important, it is a tragedy for 400 families who are going to be impacted by this loss.

It's said best by Ms Vuletic, 57 years old, one month short of her pension. She said: "Who's going to hire me at my age? My daughter's 24. She's home. She's got a college education. Who's going to hire me?" That outlines clearly the pain and suffering and difficulty that goes with a plant closure. This company over the years has struggled but has survived.

I stand today to ask the province of Ontario, the Premier and the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism, along with the Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Minister of Canada, to arrange a meeting with the owners of the company, with the union, and to see if there is any way some government intervention somehow by this provincial government jointly with the federal government will help either spread out the layoffs or, best of all, keep this plant operating.

It's a tragedy and I'm urging the provincial government to work together with the federal government to intervene and try to help these people of Hamilton and retain the 400 jobs they're going to lose.

#### CARDIAC SURGERY

**Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie):** On January 15 I asked a question in this House of the Minister of

Health. It was concerning the long waiting list for cardiac surgery in Sudbury, the place that people from my community go when they need that done. I said that in November 1995 there were 60 people on that waiting list. In November 1996 there were over 230, and that list is still growing. The minister, in response, said, "I'd be more than happy to indicate to the member opposite that I personally am taking a very active interest and I'm very concerned about this situation in Sudbury and right across the province."

Here we are, a month later, and nothing has been done. As a matter of fact, the situation gets worse. On the date that I asked the question of the minister, I talked of a loved one in the family who died. Last week two more people from Sault Ste Marie, two of my constituents, died because of the waiting list for heart surgery.

The waiting list has now gone from 230 to 250 and these people aren't dying because they have a heart that's not well. These people are dying because they're on a waiting list that is too long, that keeps them waiting too long and that creates complications and makes it really difficult for doctors to determine when a person goes from an elective surgery process to one that is of a more serious nature and on to an emergency list. Sometimes by the time they get on there they've had a number of heart attacks and they can't be cured.

Mr Speaker, will you ask the Minister of Health to look —

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin):** Thank you.

#### VALERIE ORR

**Mr Joseph Spina (Brampton North):** Each year the city of Brampton recognizes outstanding citizens in our community. The Citizen of the Year is chosen by the Brampton Guardian newspaper from nominations submitted from citizens in our community. On behalf of my colleague from Brampton South, I want to congratulate Valerie Orr, who was named the 1996 Brampton Citizen of the Year.

The long-time community volunteer and former city councillor accepted this award last night. Her more than 27 years of voluntary and community service are too numerous to mention in a minute and a half, but here are just a couple of examples:

She served on various boards from 1972 to 1985, including the YM-YWCA, and was founder of Fish the Good Neighbour program. She worked door-to-door campaigns for the Heart and Stroke Foundation, the Salvation Army and the Cancer Society; organized the first free clothing trade; was a volunteer librarian and tutor; worked with children's aid; coached girls' softball for 12 years; was a member of the Optimist Club, the Zonta Club, on the board of directors of DARE and St John Ambulance; and, last but not least, was responsible for saving and organizing the Canada Day celebration committee when it was cut from the city budget several years ago. She continues to serve as chair to this day.

On behalf of the province of Ontario, I congratulate Valerie Orr, a truly remarkable individual, for her hard work and dedication to the city of Brampton.



LEGISLATIVE PAGES  
PAGES DE L'ASSEMBLÉE

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin):** Before we proceed to oral questions, it's now the time again when we have to say goodbye to our young pages. I believe they did an extremely good job, very energetic. Also, as a French-speaking member of Parliament, j'ai pu remarquer que quelques-uns d'entre eux s'expriment excessivement bien en français. Je vous félicite.

I want to wish you all the best, good luck, and in 20 years from now I want to see at least two or three of you in this House. The best of luck.

ORAL QUESTIONS

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

**Mrs Elinor Caplan (Oriole):** Mr Speaker, my question —

**Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River):** Point of order, Mr Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin):** Please take your seat, the member for Oriole.

**Mr Hampton:** Can you tell us how question period should proceed when half the cabinet is not here?

**The Deputy Speaker:** I wish I could help you. The member for Oriole. Start the clock again, please.

**Mrs Caplan:** Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. My question today is for the Minister of Community and Social Services. Minister, you ignored all the advice of every single expert when you dumped the cost of welfare on municipal taxpayers. Yesterday, finally acknowledging the financial ruin that municipalities will face when there's an economic downturn, your colleague the Minister of Municipal Affairs started talking about giving municipalities the power to set welfare rates.

Minister, certainly you know the lunacy of such a policy. Can you tell me: What is your position on allowing municipalities to set welfare rates in this province?

**Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Community and Social Services):** First of all, we are not in the habit of acknowledging things that are not true. What we are doing under the Who Does What initiative in the social network, in the social area, is to build on what works very well. What works very well is a provincial and municipal partnership, and that's what we're talking about here. I said on the day of my announcement when I outlined what we were doing, and I continue to say, we need to have province-wide standards. Part of those province-wide standards are the rates.

**Mrs Caplan:** I will repeat to the minister again, and she must acknowledge in this House, that she has not accepted the advice of experts. She has rejected all of that advice and allowed municipal taxpayers to foot the bill for welfare, long-term care, public health.

My question to the minister: I would say to her I can already hear your future responses. "It's not our fault the municipalities are slashing rates and handing out bus tickets. It's not our fault the property taxpayers are resisting or targeting and vilifying the poor and disabled."

Minister, dumping welfare on municipal taxpayers is wrong. Creating a mishmash of services and rates across this province will only make that mistake worse. You are not fixing the problem, and your entanglement is creating a hundred new problems.

I say to the minister, you are supposed to be the advocate for the poor and the vulnerable in the Harris government's cabinet. Stand up today and tell the Minister of Municipal Affairs he's wrong. Will you do your job and fight for the poor, the sick, the disabled —

**The Deputy Speaker:** The question has been asked. Minister.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing does not need advice from me, but perhaps the honourable member could use a little bit of advice when she starts questioning the motives and the caring and the commitment of the municipalities out there. They haven't been slashing rates in the past; they are not going to be slashing rates in the future.

**Mrs Caplan:** They've never set rates.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** We have said and they have agreed —

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order. It's only fair that if you've asked a question, you should wait for the answer and listen attentively so that you could prepare your supplementary. Minister.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Ontarians do not want a mishmash of services; they want province-wide standards. There will be province-wide standards. That has been our commitment since we started this; it remains our commitment.

1350

**Mrs Caplan:** I would remind the minister that everything she says is in Hansard and that she is differing greatly from what the municipalities are expecting as a result of the Minister of Municipal Affairs' comments.

In addition to the cost of welfare and seniors long-term care and other costs that you're dumping on municipal taxpayers is the cost of providing medication to the poor and disabled through the Ontario drug benefit plan. You will remember that your government has already imposed new user fees on the poor and disabled and on seniors.

Will you acknowledge that the poor are more likely to become ill because of poor nutrition and the lack of proper shelter, and given that the Minister of Municipal Affairs seems willing to give municipalities the power to set welfare rates, will you guarantee us today that municipalities will not be able to cut drug benefits or impose additional user fees on people in their communities?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** The honourable member was not at the meeting that we had with AMO representatives yesterday. If she had been, she would realize that what she is saying is seriously in error.

Municipalities believe and support the fact that we need to have province-wide standards for our social service safety network in this province. They also want to participate. They've been participating now. They've been part of the system for something like 100 years. That's been one of the strengths of the system. They will continue to be participating in this system, as they should be.

We have a shared responsibility to those who are in need, we have a shared accountability to those who are



in need, and we share the costs. We've ensured that the municipalities will have the financial strength they need to pay those costs.

### AMBULANCE SERVICES

**Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines):** My question is for the Minister of Health. Quality health care services represent a fundamental value which all Ontarians would say defines them as being different from Americans. In other words, we in Canada have a different approach, a substantially and fundamentally different approach to health care from our American friends.

We found out earlier this week, and I drew to the attention of the House my concern, that a giant American health service company, Rural/Metro Corp, is moving into the ambulance service business in Ontario in a big way and is, according to its president, Bob DeShane, and I quote, "interested in being a significant player in the Ontario marketplace."

Americans have a far different view of health care than we Canadians, a fundamentally different approach. You will note that the Rural/Metro Corp president referred to the marketplace. Minister, are you not concerned that this powerful US firm is moving into Ontario and will bring a market-oriented, strictly business, profit-first approach to ambulance services in our province?

**Hon David Johnson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Minister of Health, Government House Leader):** What I'm concerned about is that we have the best possible health care for the people of Ontario.

I can assure you that the Ambulance Act hasn't changed. Through the Ambulance Act, the province of Ontario continues staff qualifications, for example, which haven't changed and which the Ministry of Health will continue to monitor. The licensing requirements haven't changed with regard to ambulances, and the Ministry of Health will continue to monitor that.

The ministry has been informed that this may happen, but we have not received official notification. I think the bottom line is that we are concerned about ensuring quality of health care. The ministry maintains, through the Ambulance Act, the ability to ensure that quality to the people of Ontario.

**Mr Bradley:** In western New York state, which I guess is the closest jurisdiction to compare, they charge a flat fee of \$218 to open the door of the ambulance, to provide basic life support service. A patient must pay \$350 for advanced life support, \$5.45 per mile and \$26.80 for oxygen, IV and so on. In Ontario, I believe the cost is \$45.

As you download or dump on municipalities the cost of ambulance services, and these municipalities will be struggling to deal with so many other responsibilities you have thrust upon them, as well as their regular responsibilities, it is likely that many of them will simply turn to the American ambulance giant for service. Can you guarantee that patients will not have to get out their wallets before they get into the ambulance, will not have to pay up front, will not have the cost of ambulance service increased and will not have their ambulance service delisted by your government?

**Hon David Johnson:** There is a copayment, as members of this House will know, in terms of ambulance services; 1992 was the last time it was increased under the NDP government. It's \$45. It's collected by the hospital. There'll be no change to that fee. Ambulance services are insured services under OHIP and there are no charges that can be levied for ambulance services, only that \$45 copayment paid to the hospital. That is fixed at \$45.

**Mr Bradley:** Again I say to the minister that one of the values that defines us as Canadians is our attitude towards health care. That's our belief: that the quality and access to excellent health care should not be dependent upon the size of a person's bank account or the amount of money in an individual's wallet.

Minister, you have tried to give us some assurance this afternoon, but how can we accept this assurance in light of the fact that your leader, the Premier of this province, said during the last election campaign, "Certainly I can guarantee you it's not my plan to close hospitals"? The people in Grimsby, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Fort Erie, Port Colborne and St Catharines, who have signed petitions, come out in the thousands in numbers, written letters and made telephone calls, do not believe that statement.

How can we believe your assurance this afternoon when your Premier clearly has not lived up to the obligation he made to the people of this province during the election campaign?

**Hon David Johnson:** I wonder if the member would believe me if I said what is important is not so much who delivers the service, but the result. Would you believe that? Because that statement was made by the former Minister of Health, the member for Oriole, the member sitting right beside you.

Our concern is for the quality. The Ministry of Health has the ability to control the quality through the Ambulance Act. The Ambulance Act has not changed. This ministry remains committed to high-quality ambulance services in Ontario.

### SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

**Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River):** My question is for the Minister of Community and Social Services. Members of cabinet came out of the meeting with the Association of Municipalities of Ontario yesterday saying that municipalities would have some role in setting social assistance rates. Municipal Affairs and Housing Minister Al Leach said after the meeting that he doesn't know if social assistance rates will be higher or lower following negotiations with municipalities. He said everything is on the table when it comes to setting welfare rates.

To the Minister of Community and Social Services: You are creating a situation where one municipality will have an incentive to try to offload their social assistance caseload on to neighbouring municipalities. You are creating a situation where what will happen is a race to the bottom. Can you guarantee us there will be a provincial standard, and a provincial standard that will be enforced?

**Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Community and Social Services):** We have always said that there will be



provincial standards, and those provincial standards must be enforced.

**Mr Hampton:** Maybe the minister can explain this comment. A few weeks ago, Saturday, January 25, the Windsor Star printed an interview with your colleague the Deputy Premier and Minister of Finance. They asked him if municipalities will be encouraged to provide the least attractive social assistance package so the needy will wander up the road to the next municipality. Here is what the Minister of Finance answered:

"I think there are tremendous savings that could be had in that area. The city of Toronto tops up its social assistance payments considerably, so is it any wonder that they have a higher proportion of people on social assistance?"

From the sound of it, the finance minister agrees with the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

1400

I want to ask you again: Are poor families in cities like Toronto or Cornwall going to lose emergency dental care for their children and cribs for their babies? Are these the standards you have in mind?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** The honourable member is questioning the commitment and the caring of Metropolitan Toronto, which hasn't said anything about changing its standards. We have said that there will be province-wide standards. We have said that there will be municipal flexibility, as there is now in the system, and that is not going to change.

I would like to remind the honourable member that contrary to the record their government had, we have proved it is not only possible to take the welfare system and manage costs — we've had over \$1.3 billion in savings — but it is also possible to get people off social assistance and back into the workforce, as we have done. That is certainly a track record that they were not even able to accomplish at all.

*Interjection.*

**Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma):** Throw more kids into poverty, that's your policy.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin):** The member for Fort York, the member for Algoma, please.

**Mr Hampton:** I guess the Minister of Community and Social Services would call the increasing travesty of child poverty in Ontario "managing the social assistance caseload." I guess that's what she's referring to, because that is what is happening out there. More and more children in this province are being pushed into poverty, but this minister calls it managing the social assistance caseload.

What ground rules are you going to set when you start negotiating welfare rates with municipalities? How are you going to prevent the scenario where we can see rich and poor alike fleeing cities like Cornwall, where 11% of the population is dependent on general welfare assistance alone? How do you prevent that from happening and those folks heading to municipalities that are, frankly, wealthier? Tell us, please. If you're going to allow flexibility, if everything's on the table, as the Minister of Municipal Affairs said, how are we going to ensure that you're not shipping people from one municipality to the other and we're not begging —

**The Deputy Speaker:** Minister.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Despite the attempts from the honourable member across the way to confuse the issue, there are a few facts which I think he needs reminding of.

One, there will be a province-wide rate structure. We are not going to allow municipalities to be shipping people from one community to the other. If they wanted to do it, they could be doing it now because there is municipal discretion from municipality to municipality.

Second, we have fewer people on welfare, almost 200,000 fewer people on welfare, the majority of whom have gotten back into the workforce.

The member talks about the number of families and children trapped on welfare. What about the 33% increase in families trapped on welfare during your government's rule? The 22% increase? The 11% increase? During our administration we've had an 8% decrease in the number of families trapped on welfare.

**Mr Hampton:** When I hear the Comsoc minister speak it's as if a recession didn't happen. It's as if the federal government under Brian Mulroney didn't jack interest rates up through the roof.

*Interjections.*

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order. New question.

#### FAMILY SUPPORT PLAN

**Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River):** I want to ask the Attorney General about some child poverty questions. I want to ask him about Paulette Larose and her children in Sudbury. She is on family benefits and gets \$150 off her FBA cheque each month. The family support plan says she is receiving the \$150 that's taken off her FBA cheque; however, she's not. She has called the family support plan office many times to inquire and is told they will look into it, but they never get back to her.

Kathy Antel of Atikokan. She went from July until January before she received any money. In fact, even then she didn't receive all the money she's entitled to. She is still owed over \$300 by the family support plan. She and her kids wonder what's happening to them.

Patty Tarzwell of Georgetown has two children: same situation. She is owed \$2,800 by the family support plan for the last four months.

Your government says there's no problem in the family support plan. We keep getting cases that show there is more and more child poverty caused by your government. What's your answer?

**Hon Charles Harnick (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs):** If the member will send me over the details, I will look into them. But we have distributed \$37.5 million —

*Interjections.*

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin):** Order. A question has been asked.

**Hon Mr Harnick:** We distributed \$37.5 million last month, more money than the plan has virtually ever distributed. We now do it within 24 to 36 hours. There are 140,000 of these orders, and I can tell you that the percentage of these that are now being answered quickly is greater than ever before.



Mr Speaker, I can tell you that when they were the government and they created this mess and people didn't get paid because they couldn't collect —

*Interjections.*

**The Deputy Speaker:** The member for Welland-Thorold, the member for Riverdale, the member for Cochrane North, I would ask you to wait until the response is given, then prepare your questions and ask your questions. Minister.

**Hon Mr Harnick:** Mr Speaker, I can tell you that of the 140,000 orders, yes, there will always be cheques that come in late, there will always be payors who don't pay, there will always be employers who don't send the cheques in correctly. We are dealing with this. We are able to deal with it faster now than ever before. For them to make people think that this didn't happen when they were the government, that they didn't create this mess, is absolutely wrong.

**Mr Hampton:** We've heard this nonsense from the Attorney General before. This is the Attorney General who said there was this wonderful new plan back in August, this high-tech office, and what we found was chaos.

Sarah Rosswinter, Toronto, was awarded \$3,000 in August 1996. It was paid by cheque to the family support plan. Now, in February, still no idea where the \$3,000 disappeared to: into the family support plan.

Margaret Barbos, Blind River: A new order was issued. She has received one payment. She's still owed payments for November, December and January.

Marlene Provincial, Sudbury: Her case was registered in July 1996 and things began regularly until the Sudbury office was closed. Since then, payments have been totally irregular. She now has arrears of \$550. The payor continues to pay and it continues to disappear in the family support plan.

Donna McConnol Lang, Echo Bay: November 23, 1996, she faxed the payor's place of employment. As soon as the payor found out, he changed his job. Ms Lang can't find out where he is working. Why isn't the FSP investigating the matter? They say nothing.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Question.

**Mr Hampton:** Sharon Fenwick of Welland: Payor is working —

**The Deputy Speaker:** No, it's too long. Either you ask a question or you don't. Question, please.

**Mr Hampton:** Once again, I could read pages and pages of these. What does the Attorney General have to say?

**Hon Mr Harnick:** I've reviewed the last number of these that have been given to me and I can tell you, Mr Speaker, that if you check out the facts, you'll find out that in almost all of them either the payor hasn't paid or the employer hasn't remitted or it has been remitted improperly.

*Interjections.*

**The Deputy Speaker:** I think it's only fair that the minister has the chance to answer his question. You ask a question —

*Interjections.*

**The Deputy Speaker:** No, no. You've asked a question. Listen to it.

**Hon Mr Harnick:** As I said, we distributed \$37.5 million in payments in the month of January, more than

has ever been distributed. When they ran the family support plan, 6% of callers got through. About 12 or 14 calls got answered in a day. Today, 50% of all callers get through to the plan. We now have an MPP hotline that deals with 144 cases a day. We resolve 144 cases a day through that.

1410

*Interjections.*

**The Deputy Speaker:** If you ask a question to a minister, I think the only right thing to do is to listen to what he has to say. By shouting, you won't hear anything. I have trouble to hear myself.

**Mr Hampton:** I can assure you we'll be sharing this list with the media after the House and the media will be able to tell who is telling the truth here.

Walter Rowse of London: paying \$2,000 a month. It was reduced to \$1,500 a month in December, but the family support plan is still taking \$2,000 a month from him.

Lise Barsalou, Sudbury: The income source provided to the family support plan an advance of \$3,000 in order that Lise's payments would never fall behind. She's in arrears now by \$600 from December. Why is her case in arrears when \$3,000 was advanced?

Ron Guigue, Iroquois Falls: Mr Guigue wants to know —

**The Deputy Speaker:** No. Order. This is not a statement; it's question period. Ask your question. Otherwise, I'll just have to take it away from you. Question?

**Mr Hampton:** I could read the case of Ramona Reed of Toronto, Elizabeth Delong of London —

**The Deputy Speaker:** You know, I could tell you that you won't have your question any more, but I won't do that. But I know you will obey and you will ask your question immediately. There's no point in trying to play with the Chair; there's no reason for that. Ask your question; otherwise I will withdraw your question.

**Mr Hampton:** What does the Attorney General have to say about the eight other pages of cases, all of which either can't get their money or can't discover why their money has been lost by the family support plan? What does the Attorney General have to say —

**The Deputy Speaker:** The question has been asked. Minister.

**Hon Mr Harnick:** As I indicated before, we had a few questions the other day much the same as this. We checked out those questions and found out that in each one of those cases, the family support plan had done exactly what it was supposed to do. Yesterday, the family support plan did exactly what it was supposed to do.

**Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold):** You've had hundreds of questions, Charlie, and you lied about it.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Member for Welland-Thorold.

**Hon Mr Harnick:** It distributed \$1.3 million to over 4,000 families. It answered 50% of the calls that came in, compared to when they ran the plan and 6% of call got answered. We're correcting their disaster and we're making it work for women and children.

#### HEALTH CARE FUNDING

**Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor-Sandwich):** My question is for the Minister of Health. I would like you



to explain today what criteria you use in determining the level of cuts to health service agencies.

**Hon David Johnson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Minister of Health, Government House Leader):** I think the member would have to be a little more specific. Overall, the funding in health care in fact is up. The province committed to \$17.4 billion in health care funding through the last election; the actual budget is \$17.7 billion for this fiscal year in health care funding, all aspects of health care funding. In fact, I think the challenge will be to keep the health care spending at the end of the fiscal year to that level. It will most likely be beyond it.

**Mrs Pupatello:** Minister, I would like you to explain to me, then, why members of your caucus respond to their constituents who write to them concerned about cuts to their health care centres — for example, the member for Etobicoke-Lakeshore, who received letters from people concerned about Stonegate Community Health Centre. His response to these people was:

“The letter circulated to you is misleading. In fact, it’s going to make me look a little more closely at that centre. I think this should be a review of the budget of that health centre. In fact, I wonder about the very ability to administer the fiscal responsibilities of the centre.”

Minister, is this your style? Is this the style similar to the minister of women’s affairs, who goes to London to the women’s centre and threatens them with reviews of their budget because they choose to write to your caucus members?

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin):** The question has been asked.

**Hon David Johnson:** I don’t know what letter the member opposite has; I don’t know who has sent such a letter. I will say that the ministry, the province of Ontario, clearly established that the number one service for the people of Ontario is health care. We did that before the last election. That was our platform during the election. That has been the reality since the election. Of all the budgets in the province, the one that has been protected is the budget for the Ministry of Health.

**Mrs Pupatello:** It makes me wonder about the fiscal responsibility.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Member for Windsor-Walker-ville, you have asked a question. Listen to it.

**Hon David Johnson:** The member opposite should have an answer and she should pose the question to Mr Martin and Mr Chrétien. They’re the ones —

*Interjections.*

**The Deputy Speaker:** Excuse me, Minister. You know, some type of language sometimes is accepted, but some type of language also can lead to language which is not acceptable, so just be polite.

## ECONOMIC STATEMENT

**Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie):** My question is for the Minister of Finance. You delivered your economic statement to the standing committee on finance and economic affairs last week. It certainly played well on Wall Street and Bay Street and in the international monetary community, but here at home, in communities across the province, it’s playing quite differently.

Your economist friends called your report on Ontario a Cinderella story. An economist for the Steelworkers tells us we are riding a bubble and in danger because of our growing dependence on the American economy. We know this: There are currently 529,000 people unemployed in Ontario. That’s 25,000 more than when you took office, and more and more of those employed are underemployed in part-time work.

I want to get to the bottom of all this conflicting news. Would you agree, Minister, that the fiscal picture should be an accurate reflection of economic activity and would you agree that revenues, for example, should give you an accurate reflection of economic activity?

**Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance):** The third-quarter statement that we released in committee last Thursday speaks for itself. Revenues, especially tax revenues, are up substantially in Ontario. The outlook for growth in the province is certainly good for 1997 and 1998. Our projections are far more cautious and conservative than private forecasters are in terms of growth in the economy, and that in turn leads to jobs.

The honourable member talks about job creation in the province of Ontario. Last year there were over 80,000 net new jobs created in the province. Last month the unemployment rate actually dropped slightly, from 9.1% to 9.0%. He knows that last week the Royal Bank of Canada and the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce both released reports predicting that unemployment in this province will fall to 8% or 8.1%, depending on which one you pick, by 1998. I think those are all positive factors.

There have been over 90,000 jobs created in the private sector in the last year. He will also know, as was discussed in committee, that there were 107,000 more people seeking employment in Ontario last year than ever were before. The help wanted index was up 4.2% in December. It’s up another 2% in January —

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin):** Thank you. Supplementary.

1420

**Mr Martin:** That’s what you said last Thursday. You attempted to take credit for the revenue boost and the progress you have made on the deficit because of your policies. Last Thursday you said, “Over the past 18 months, this government has taken decisive action to create jobs in the province of Ontario and to bring our...finances under control.”

*Interjections.*

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order.

**Mr Martin:** This morning in the finance committee we heard from a witness that you factored into your 1996 figures revenue actually generated in 1995, which paints a completely different picture.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Question.

**Mr Martin:** The deficit is actually \$600 million less than you reported. When you take the boost in revenue out of this year, because it has really nothing to do with this year, you end up with a deficit that is \$600 million higher.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Question.

**Mr Martin:** That is —

*Interjections.*



**The Deputy Speaker:** Order. The clock is ticking. It's your time. If you were to keep your questions short and sweet — your question, please.

**Mr Martin:** The deficit last year was \$8.14 billion; this year it's \$8.25 billion. Minister, why do you take credit for increased revenues for economic boom and for deficit reduction? When you take away the spin and accurately reflect the economic activity of the province in the fiscal picture, you find out that in fact the deficit has increased this year by \$100 million.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The question has been asked. Minister.

**Hon Mr Eves:** I know the member's party finds it difficult to believe, but when you lower taxes you actually get more people working, they pay more tax — it doesn't matter whether it's retail sales tax, alcohol tax, gasoline tax, tobacco tax, corporations tax or income tax, whatever it is, the revenue goes up.

He's quite correct. We stated quite up front in my statement that \$578 million of the increase in revenue was the 1995 amount. Similarly, when you go back to 1995, some of the money in there is from 1994. When you go back to 1994, some of the money in there is from 1993. When you go back to 1993, you begin to get the picture. This has gone on ever since the federal government has collected taxes on behalf of provinces. They keep the money, they keep the interest on it, they undercalculate and then they send the —

*Interjections.*

**The Deputy Speaker:** Thank you. Minister, take your seat.

#### TOURISM RESERVATION NETWORK

**Mr Ted Chudleigh (Halton North):** My question is to the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism. I think all members in this House will agree that Ontario's tourism industry is an important generator of jobs, tax revenue and foreign currency. Last May, in an effort to do things more effectively and efficiently within your ministry, an agreement was made with Bell Global Solutions for Bell to take over the operation and financing of the 1-800 Ontario tourism reservation line. At that time you were quoted as saying, "This is a business opportunity that will help generate tourist spending and help strengthen the tourist industry in Ontario, a strong economic sector that earns over \$11 billion a year."

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin):** Question.

**Mr Chudleigh:** "I am confident this agreement will help the tourist industry to grow in new and innovative ways and lead to increased business and jobs creation."

**The Deputy Speaker:** Question.

**Mr Chudleigh:** Minister, now that this service has been in operation for almost a year, can you tell us how much response there is to this new 1-800 Ontario service?

**Hon William Saunderson (Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism):** I am very happy to respond to that question and I know the people in the opposition are very happy the question has been asked because they want to know this good news.

First of all, I might say that in effect this is a form of privatization by our party. I'm happy to say that there

have been more than 410,000 calls to that 1-800 number in the last six months. These calls have resulted in 16,000 or more room reservations having been confirmed. This converts to about \$1.5 million in total sales to the hospitality industry. We've sent out 71,000 information kits, 30,000 of which have gone to the United States.

**Mr Chudleigh:** Do you judge this upgraded process to have been a solid investment on behalf of the taxpayers of Ontario in terms of jobs and savings to the taxpayers when weighed against service?

**Hon Mr Saunderson:** I'm happy to report that —  
*Interjections.*

**Hon Mr Saunderson:** I think these figures are very important to be listened to. First of all, this new system is an annual saving to the province of \$3.2 million. We're also happy to report that 150 hotels have recently joined this service, bringing the total number of properties online up to 225. We've expanded service from 16 communities to 95, and we're averaging 5,000 calls a day, which is 1,000 more than the old system.

I have to say that the average hold time to reach a live operator is 37 seconds, compared to the five minutes of the previous system of the other parties. This is a very sensible and profitable operation for the province.

#### STUDENT ASSISTANCE AND TUITION FEES

**Mr Alvin Curling (Scarborough North):** I have a question to the Minister of Education and Training. You have announced that you are giving the go-ahead to universities to raise tuition this year up to 20%. This year's tuition increase is over and above the NDP's 42% increase when they were in government, and you raised tuition another 20% last year. On top of those hikes, you're adding an additional tuition increase of anywhere from 10% and 20%.

That's unacceptable and students are telling you that's unacceptable. They simply can't find the money to pay more. The crowds of students protesting at York University and the University of Toronto are sending you a clear message that they can't take any more of your cuts. Students in universities and colleges, and even your own review, the Smith report, says not to hike tuition fees. Who told you that tuition increases are a good idea?

**Hon John Snobelen (Minister of Education and Training):** I want to thank the member for Scarborough North for the question. Yes, we have announced recently that we'll be extending increased flexibility to universities and colleges regarding tuition. In fact, I'm sure the member opposite will be pleased to note that this is limited to 10% of the fees collected by an institution, and we've also asked institutions to withhold 30% of any increase for student aid. That fits on top of this government's commitment to student aid, which includes \$100 million to a student trust fund which will direct funds in perpetuity to students most in need. We also have announced an Ontario merit scholarship which will reimburse 100% of the cost of tuition to the top 2% of students in every program across the province.

The accessibility of our colleges and universities remains a primary concern of this government, as is excellence and quality in our programming, two of the



issues addressed by the Smith commission. I would advise the member opposite, although it's unusual for me to have to give this particular member this advice, to perhaps read the Smith commission report again, because the Smith commission does address the idea of flexibility and quality in our institutions.

**Mr Curling:** That flexibility you're talking about has outraged the students. They are now occupying the president's office at both the University of Toronto and York University. What you have done is pitted the students against the administration, and you know that. You must take responsibility, Minister. Your cuts of over \$400 million are responsible for the tuition increases and will serve to make our colleges and universities accessible only to the wealthy, regardless of what you say. You are making them an élite institution.

The student debt load is increasing. Student bankruptcy is increasing. Young people now face an unemployment rate of over 30%. When will you deliver on your commitment to support students?

**Hon Mr Snobelen:** As I said a moment ago, this government has an enviable track record on new and innovative ideas that will help the students who are most in need, including a \$100-million commitment to a student trust fund, including requiring universities and colleges to withhold portions of any increase to assist the students most in need.

In addition to that — and I'm sure the member opposite will remember this from the red book promises during the campaign when his party said, "Students should pay a fair and appropriate share of the costs of their post-secondary education, but the current system of student assistance is not meeting student needs." I agree with the member opposite. I agree with this statement. That's why we're pushing for an income-contingent loans program.

I would advise the member opposite to push his colleagues in Ottawa to get their —

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin):** Order. The member for Algoma.

1430

#### CAPITAL FUNDING FOR SCHOOLS

**Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma):** I have a question to the Minister of Education and Training. As we know, at the end of January the minister raised the moratorium he had placed on capital construction projects for school boards across Ontario that had been in place for a year, which held up construction that had been planned previously. Then one week later he introduced Bill 104, which ties the hands of school boards with regard to expenditures. Most boards now don't know whether they should proceed with construction or not.

Since the minister has taken away the ability of boards to raise revenues through local taxes, and at the same time he is telling them to go ahead and build schools as long as they can pay their share, can the minister explain how this is going to happen?

**Hon John Snobelen (Minister of Education and Training):** First of all, to the member for Algoma, I was pleased last night to be in or near his riding and have a

meeting with parents and concerned citizens in that area. It was a very productive meeting.

In response to the capital announcement, yes, we were able to announce that the moratorium is over, that there is \$650 million for construction over the next two years of schools that are badly needed in Ontario. And yes, I have talked to the directors of education, from CODE, just recently and told them what our plans were for releasing those funds, for meeting those plans.

These schools, as the member has indicated, have been on the drawing boards for some time. We've been very clear with directors of education that they can go forward, put the shovel in the ground this spring and build those schools. If they must borrow the money for those projects, they'll have to meet a template for that borrowing, but we will make sure that that is available to them and that they can get on with construction.

**Mr Wildman:** The minister knows that under Bill 104 boards must get approval from the still non-existent Education Improvement Commission in order to purchase property of more than \$50,000 or before they can enter a contract that extends beyond next December.

The ministry's memo explains this, saying: "Should you wish to proceed with approved projects over the next several weeks, I suggest that you ensure that site purchase agreements of more than \$50,000 or contractual agreements which extend beyond December 1, 1997, contain a clause indicating that the agreement is subject to the approval of the proposed Education Improvement Commission."

The minister is a business person. Would he enter into a contract with a school board that is soon no longer to exist, where a contract is conditional on the approval of a commission that does not yet exist?

**Hon Mr Snobelen:** As I said just a moment ago, we have talked to directors of education in the province. If they have funds currently available to build these schools that they requested from the ministry some time ago, they can go forward without asking anyone's approval, and the province will put its funding forward. If they must make a loan that will bridge between their current school board structure and the next school board structure, they must meet a template for that borrowing, and we will make that information available to them so as not to delay construction.

I would encourage the member opposite and all members opposite to allow us to go through the process we're now going through on 104 so that this legislation can become law in Ontario. Unfortunately, it was somewhat delayed.

One other point I think must be made. Our record on this subject is exemplary in the province of Ontario and this government for this reason: We have not done what the government previous did, which was make promises for schools but failed to deliver money. Second, we haven't done what their counterparts in British Columbia did, which was to announce new construction of schools but only in NDP ridings in —

*Interjections.*

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin):** Let's not forget Valentine's Day is tomorrow.



## GROW ONTARIO

**Mr Jack Carroll (Chatham-Kent):** My question is for the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. Since the election of June 1995, you and the government have continued to recognize the importance of our agrifood and rural industries and the contribution they make to the economic wellbeing of Ontario.

*Interjections.*

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin):** Order. Would you repeat your question because I couldn't understand one word.

**Mr Carroll:** My question is for the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. Since the election of June 1995, you and our government have continued to recognize the importance of agrifood and rural industries and the contribution they make to the economic wellbeing of our province, and you've supported them with various different programs. The Grow Ontario program announced in our 1996 budget is a good example of that support. Could you give us an update, please, on the number of applications that have been processed and approved so far?

**Hon Noble Villeneuve (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, minister responsible for francophone affairs):** I want to thank my honourable colleague for that question. We're very proud of the Grow Ontario program. It's a \$15-million injection into the rural community to make farmers more productive, more competitive, to bring in new investment and to go and get new markets.

We have some 250 applications presently waiting for process. It's matching dollars from the government of Ontario to the industry to help the agrifood sector double its exports in the next five years and we're proud of that. We're also proud of the rebate on the provincial sales tax, so \$35 million-plus of new money is going right back into the rural economy. We're proud of that.

**Mr Carroll:** Citizens of my riding of Chatham-Kent were recently happy to learn that you have extended the deadline on the program. Could you please update us on the reasons behind your decision to make that extension?

**Hon Mr Villeneuve:** Yes, we have a new deadline now to March 15. We have had a large number of applications and they're still coming in. I encourage anyone who's thinking of a Grow Ontario application, where matching government funds will help the private sector —

**Mrs Elinor Caplan (Oriole):** They don't like the cuts to the farm rebate program either. You cut everything else. They know the truth, Noble.

**Hon Mr Villeneuve:** I always find it amazing that the opposition cannot take good news. They just cannot take good news.

**Mrs Caplan:** They know the truth, Noble.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The member for Oriole, order, please. Minister, in a few words.

**Hon Mr Villeneuve:** The final deadline for the Grow Ontario program is March 15 and we fully anticipate a large number of applications. I encourage anyone who is planning a Grow Ontario application to put in their application now.

## MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

**Mr Frank Miclash (Kenora):** My question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs. Last weekend I attended the Kenora District Municipal Association meeting in Sioux Lookout, along with the parliamentary assistant from the Ministry of Northern Development. The parliamentary assistant left an interesting message with the delegates there and with myself. He indicated there would be no forced amalgamation in the province.

Minister, the delegates and myself were very confused, especially knowing what's happening here in Toronto and especially knowing what you've said about this in the past, when you have indicated that if municipalities couldn't amalgamate you would do it for them. Now your parliamentary assistant has gone up there and said there will be no forced amalgamations. Who do we believe?

**Hon Al Leach (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing):** As the member opposite would know, under Bill 26 we gave the municipalities and counties and northern Ontario the opportunity to work with each other to ensure that — we would prefer to see local options on restructuring and that's why across the province right at the present time there are 350 municipalities involved in restructuring proposals on a cooperative basis. We believe that in most instances decisions made locally are best.

There are situations in Ontario where discussions on restructuring have gone on for decades and it is prudent for this government to come in and make decisions where they have to be made, but we certainly encourage local decisions wherever it's possible to do so.

1440

**Mr Miclash:** Did I just hear you say there will be forced amalgamations in areas where municipalities can't do it themselves? I think that's what I just heard you say. The parliamentary assistant is up in the north saying there will be no forced amalgamations, but I just heard you say here that there will be if the municipalities can't do it for themselves.

Let me quote to you out of Municipal World of June 1996: "Municipal Affairs and Housing Minister Al Leach and Ernie Hardeman, the minister's parliamentary assistant, were at the May 2 and 3 Ontario Small Urban Municipalities Conference in Stratford tirelessly repeating the chorus of their Common Sense Revolution: Restructure yourself or have it done for you. As the minister said in his luncheon speech: 'I have repeated the message over and over. Ontario municipal officials know that only too well.'"

Are we or are we not looking at forced amalgamations by this government?

**Hon Mr Leach:** As the member knows, municipalities that are attempting to amalgamate with each other or restructure within a county or in a rural area that come to an impasse have the ability to request that a commission be appointed to assist them in finalizing their deliberations. In every instance in northern Ontario, in rural Ontario, in eastern Ontario and western Ontario, if a municipality has difficulty concluding their restructuring process, they can ask the province to appoint a commission. The decision of that commission, if appointed, would be final, but it must be initiated by the local municipality.



**Mr Miclash:** Point of —

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin):** I can take it afterwards.

### HOSPITAL FINANCING

**Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie):** My question is for the Minister of Health. Are you or your government encouraging or supportive of a two-tiered health care system? Better still, are you aware that there is a two-tiered health care system evolving out there because of the cuts that you're forcing on hospitals and the health care system in this province?

**Hon David Johnson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Minister of Health, Government House Leader):** I have to take exception to that. The Ministry of Health laid out a funding plan to hospitals over a year ago. It was a program that we committed to at that time, a program that we've adhered to. In addition to that, I might say, we have invested in health care in various programs that would be run through hospitals, such as kidney dialysis, some \$25 million; cardiac surgery, some \$16 million; diabetes, another \$6 million, and on and on it goes.

The Ministry of Health and the province of Ontario are committed to health care, are committed to excellence in our hospitals, and we have put our money where our mouth is.

**Mr Martin:** Let me share with you what's going on out there. You should take some time out of your busy schedule to get out and visit some hospitals across this province.

I shared with you earlier in the week two very disturbing stories that happened in my community at the Plummer hospital. One was an Eric Snoddon, the other was Mauno Kaihla.

In the Eric Snoddon story it says: "Barton and Kiteley Funeral Home hired private nurses to be with him around the clock." And in the Kaihla story it says: "Iles had asked the nurse to pass on a brochure and photocopy from the yellow pages. They listed private nursing agencies. At the meeting I was told that the nursing my father was receiving was the best that the hospital could provide, with the acknowledgement that it did not meet basic necessities at times. I was told I should hire a private nurse to come in three hours a day."

It goes on —

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin):** Question.

**Mr Martin:** "Regarding the brochure, I wanted to know whether the Plummer endorsed one level of nursing for the poor and a superior one for those who could afford to hire privately."

I ask you on behalf of Paul Kaihla and all the poor people out there who can't afford private health care or who don't have a private insurance plan, are you encouraging and supportive of a two-tiered health care system in Ontario and do you know that it's happening?

**Hon David Johnson:** The province of Ontario is committed to the Canada Health Act. The province of Ontario is committed to excellence in health care to the people of Ontario. One way we've demonstrated that is in terms of hospitals, those hospitals going through

restructuring. The province of Ontario is committed to the highest percentage capital investment in those hospitals; 70% of the investment required to restructure those hospitals comes from the province of Ontario. That's the highest investment in hospitals.

Second, the NDP's approach to health was to tally up \$3 billion worth of projects but not to fund them. This government is committed to finding the funds through administrative efficiencies and reinvesting that money back into health care.

### DRY-CLEANING CHEMICALS

**Mr David Tilson (Dufferin-Peel):** I have a question for the Minister of Environment and Energy with respect to the dry-cleaning industry and its effect on the environment. It has come to my attention that the federal government has declared four chemicals toxic under the Canadian Environmental Protection Act and is moving forward in a regulation requiring dry cleaners to reduce by 70% their use of a chemical which is a suspected human carcinogen. Minister, could you please tell the House about your ministry's initiatives to ensure the safety of dry-cleaning operations in the province of Ontario?

**Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Environment and Energy):** I'm acutely aware of this problem because in my own home town of Manotick we had a significant problem with regard to improper dumping by a dry-cleaner in the recent past.

This industry is now working closely with my ministry. Since June 1996 every dry-cleaning site in Ontario has been required to have a full-time trained person on environmental practices in their particular institute. Training is based on the Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment code of practice for dry cleaners.

This is not only being put forward by the ministry, but it has been accepted as well by such groups as the Ontario Fabric Association and the Korean Dry Cleaners Association. We are improving our environment through cooperative actions with the people who are involved in the businesses.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin):** That's the end of question period.

**Mr Frank Miclash (Kenora):** On a point of privilege, Mr Speaker: Being that I heard the exact opposite from the Minister of Municipal Affairs here today in question period than what I heard from the parliamentary assistant —

*Interjections.*

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order, the member for Kenora. Order, the member for Beaches-Woodbine, the member for Algoma, the member for Dufferin-Peel.

Member for Kenora, you have a point of privilege. I will listen to it now.

**Mr Miclash:** Being that I heard the exact opposite from the Minister of Municipal Affairs here today to what I heard in Sioux Lookout from the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Northern Development last weekend, I would ask that the parliamentary assistant get up and correct the record on what he told —

**The Deputy Speaker:** That's not a point of privilege.



**Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I have what I consider to be a point of order and I consider it to be a very grave matter. Section 21 —

*Interjections.*

**The Deputy Speaker:** For those who want to leave, do so now. We'll wait patiently.

Member for Cochrane South.

**Mr Bisson:** I rise on a point of order that I consider to be quite serious. Sections 21, 22 and 23 specifically deal with how members of the House must conduct themselves while in this chamber. Earlier there was a bit of an exchange going on between members from the opposition caucus and the government. The Acting Speaker, the member for Perth, while that was going on, was making — how would I explain in a very gentlemanly manner? —

1450

**Mr Tony Ruprecht (Parkdale):** Derogatory.

**Mr Bisson:** — derogatory comments about the member for Oriole by heckling back in a shrill voice, trying to make fun of her voice as a woman. I find that quite offensive, especially coming from somebody who sits in the chair of this Legislature and is supposed to be one of the deputy Deputy Speakers of this Legislature.

**The Deputy Speaker:** I've heard your point.

*Interjections.*

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order. As you know, it's extremely difficult for the Speaker to hear anything in this House if everybody talks at the same time.

*Interjections.*

**The Deputy Speaker:** Let me finish. If the honourable member for Perth has said anything which is derogatory, which is not acceptable in this House, I would ask you to apologize.

**Mr Bert Johnson (Perth):** Mr Speaker, I rise on a point of order and, yes, if I said anything that was offensive to anybody in this chamber, I would apologize.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Thank you. The question is settled.

## MOTIONS

### PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

**Hon David Johnson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Minister of Health, Government House Leader):** I move that, notwithstanding standing order 96(h), the requirement for notice be waived with respect to ballot items 65, 67 and 68.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin):** Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

## PETITIONS

### CHILD CARE

**Mr Tony Ruprecht (Parkdale):** I have a petition that reads as follows. It's addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario Tory government has decided to replace our current child care system with one that lacks compassion and common sense, and is fraught with many dangerous consequences; and

"Whereas the concept of affordable, accessible and quality child care is a basic important fundamental right for many members of our community, who are either unemployed and enrolled into a training program, or are working single parents, or where both parents are working; and

"Whereas if our present provincial government is sincere in getting people back to work, they should recognize the value of the child care component of the Jobs Ontario program and acknowledge the validity of the wage subsidy to the child care workers;

"We, the undersigned residents, business owners and child care workers of our Parkdale and High Park communities, urge the Progressive Conservative government of Ontario to immediately suspend their plans to implement cuts to our present child care programs across our province, and restore funding to their previous levels."

I will sign my name to this petition because I agree with it.

## MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

**Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale):** I have a petition which reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the creation of a megacity in Toronto is a smokescreen to hide the downloading of massive costs in health, welfare, housing and other social service costs on Metro and other municipalities; and

"Whereas study after study shows that megacities are more expensive and less efficient than smaller, more accountable local governments; and

"Whereas a megacity will create a huge new bureaucracy; and

"Whereas the costs of setting up and running a megacity will force up taxes and rent in Toronto; and

"Whereas a megacity will lead to cuts in libraries, public transit, public health, parks, swimming pools and child care centres; and

"Whereas, in disregard of basic democratic principles, the Harris Conservative government has acted as if Bill 103 were already law, appointing trustees to oversee the actions of elected public officials, with no accountability to the citizens; and

"Whereas Premier Mike Harris and Municipal Affairs Minister Al Leach, in an arrogant rush to find billions to pay for a phoney tax scheme, have declared they will ignore the results of the March 3 vote by citizens of Metro Toronto on the megacity;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to listen to the voices of outrage against the megacity legislation, follow the wishes of the public as expressed in the March 3 referendum and go back to the drawing board with local citizens and elected officials to improve local government without downloading costs or creating new mega-bureaucracies."

I affix my name to this petition.



**Mr John L. Parker (York East):** I've been given a petition to deliver on behalf of my friend and colleague the member for Don Mills. It's signed by two residents of East York and it reads as follows:

"We, the undersigned residents of East York, are in favour of the borough of East York remaining as a separate municipality."

#### NORTH YORK BRANSON HOSPITAL

**Mr Monte Kwinter (Wilson Heights):** I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the final report of the Metropolitan Toronto District Health Council hospital restructuring committee has recommended that North York Branson Hospital merge with York-Finch hospital; and

"Whereas this recommendation will remove emergency and inpatient services currently provided by North York Branson Hospital, which will seriously jeopardize medical care and the quality of health for the growing population which the hospital serves, many being elderly people who in numerous cases require treatment for life-threatening medical conditions;

"We petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reject the recommendation contained within the final report of the Metropolitan Toronto District Health Council hospital restructuring committee as it pertains to North York Branson Hospital, so that it retains, at minimum, emergency and inpatient services."

I've affixed my signature.

#### MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

**Mr Rosario Marchese (Fort York):** This is a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario against Bill 103, an act to extirpate local government in the metropolitan area.

"Whereas Bill 103, the City of Toronto Act, is a transparent ploy to facilitate the provincial government's plans to transfer essential services to local government without providing revenue to maintain these services, which will result in increased property taxes;

"Whereas local government belongs to and should be responsible to the local citizens who elected it, not to the provincial government;

"Whereas no changes to the structure of local government should be made without the consent of local citizens, using a democratic process which draws on their energy, knowledge, goodwill and support;

"Whereas apart from the federal government's War Measures Act, Bill 103 is the most far-reaching attempt to disrupt democratic decision-making ever seen in Canada,

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Legislative Assembly direct the government of Ontario to withdraw Bill 103, the City of Toronto Act, 1996, forthwith."

I affix my signature to this petition.

#### CLASS SIZE

**Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury):** "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the private member's bill introduced by Rick Bartolucci which promotes smaller class sizes passed second reading; and

"Whereas this bill, called Bill 110, was referred to the social development committee; and

"Whereas we, the stakeholders in education, want the government committee to hear what we have to say about smaller class sizes; and

"Whereas we want to hear what the government committee has to say regarding smaller class sizes; and

"Whereas all people in Ontario have a right to speak to the social development committee about smaller class sizes;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support the recommendation that the social development committee travel across Ontario to find out what the students, parents, teachers and taxpayers of Ontario are saying about smaller class sizes and Bill 110, the smaller class sizes act."

I affix my signature to this petition.

#### RÉGLEMENTATION DES LOYERS

**M. Gilles Bisson (Cochrane-Sud) :** J'ai une pétition ici soussignée par de nombreux citoyens de la ville de Timmins qui dit :

«Attendu que le gouvernement conservateur de Mike Harris prévoit démanteler le système actuel de contrôle des loyers ;

«Attendu que Mike Harris et le Parti conservateur n'ont pas mentionné le démantèlement du contrôle des loyers durant la campagne électorale de 1995 ou dans leur document intitulé La Révolution du bon sens ;

«Attendu que de nombreux candidats conservateurs dans des circonscriptions avec de fortes concentrations de locataires ont fait campagne durant les élections de 1995 en promettant de protéger le système actuel de contrôle des loyers ;

«Attendu que le gouvernement a consulté des groupes d'intérêt représentant les propriétaires et les promoteurs, tout en éliminant le financement accordé aux organismes représentant les quelque 3,5 millions de locataires en Ontario ;

«Attendu que l'élimination du contrôle des loyers va entraîner la montée en flèche des loyers en Ontario ;

«À ces causes, nous, soussignés, exhortons le Premier ministre Mike Harris, Al Leach, ministre du Logement, et les députés de l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario à mettre fin à l'attaque contre les 3,5 millions de locataires dans la province.»

1500

#### MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

**Ms Annamarie Castrilli (Downsview):** I have a petition.



"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the creation of a megacity in Toronto is a smokescreen to hide the downloading of massive costs in health, welfare, housing and other social service costs on Metro and other municipalities; and

"Whereas study after study shows that megacities are more expensive and less efficient than smaller, more accountable local governments; and

"Whereas a megacity will create a huge new bureaucracy; and

"Whereas the costs of setting up and running a megacity will force up taxes and rent in Toronto; and

"Whereas a megacity will lead to cuts in libraries, public transit, public health, parks, swimming pools and child care centres; and

"Whereas in disregard of basic democratic principles, the Harris Conservative government has acted as if Bill 103 were already law, appointing trustees to oversee the actions of elected public officials, with no accountability to the citizens; and

"Whereas Premier Mike Harris and Municipal Affairs Minister Al Leach, in an arrogant rush to find billions to pay for a phoney tax scheme, have declared they will ignore the results of the March 3 vote by citizens of Metro Toronto on the megacity;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to listen to the voices of outrage against the megacity legislation, follow the wishes of the public as expressed in the March 3 referendum and go back to the drawing board with local citizens and elected officials to improve local government without downloading costs or creating new mega-bureaucracies."

I am pleased to sign this petition.

#### FIREARMS CONTROL

**Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre):** I have a petition signed by a number of people in southwestern Ontario, Windsor and London.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas violence involving firearms is unacceptably common; and

"Whereas the requirement that firearms be registered as proposed by the federal government is reasonable;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately withdraw all opposition to the federal gun control legislation.

"Further, we demand that all money that would have been spent to oppose the federal gun control legislation instead be spent on the prevention of domestic violence and on services for victims of domestic violence."

I am proud to affix my signature.

#### LIQUOR CONTROL BOARD OF ONTARIO

**Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands):** I have a petition which is addressed to the government of Ontario.

"Whereas the government of Ontario appears to be moving towards the privatization of retail liquor and spirit sales in the province; and

"Whereas the LCBO provides a safe, secure and controlled way of retailing alcoholic beverages; and

"Whereas the LCBO provides the best method of restricting the sale of liquor to minors in Ontario; and

"Whereas the LCBO has an excellent program of quality control of the products sold in its stores; and

"Whereas the LCBO provides a wide selection of product to its customers in modern, convenient stores; and

"Whereas the LCBO has moved forward with the times, sensitive to the needs of its customers and its clients; and

"Whereas the LCBO is an important instrument for the promotion and sale of Ontario wines and thereby contributes immensely to grape growing and the wine-producing industry;

"Therefore, be it resolved that the government of Ontario abandon its plan to turn over the sale of liquor and spirits to private liquor stores and retain the LCBO for this purpose."

I've affixed my signature to it.

#### OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

**Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre):** I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the Harris government has begun a process to open the Occupational Health and Safety Act of Ontario; and

"Whereas this act is the single most important piece of legislation for working people since it is designed to protect our lives, safety and health while at work and allow us to return home to our families in the same condition in which we left; and

"Whereas the government has made it clear that they intend to water down the act and weaken the rights of workers under the law, including the right to know, the right to participate and especially the right to refuse unsafe work; and

"Whereas this government has already watered down proper training of certified committee members;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario not to alter the Occupational Health and Safety Act or erode the rights of workers any further and ensure strict enforcement of the legislation."

I add my name to theirs in support.

#### FIRE SAFETY

**Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury):** This is a petition in response to Bill 84.

"Whereas the firefighters of Sudbury and Ontario are very concerned about Bill 84;

"Whereas we feel Bill 84 is unfair;

"Whereas we feel Bill 84 is discriminatory;

"Whereas we feel Bill 84 endangers the wellbeing of the people of Ontario;

"Whereas we feel Bill 84 requires extensive changes;

"Whereas we feel Bill 84 needs broad provincial public hearings before implementation;

"Whereas we are very concerned about Bill 84 and don't want to get burned by Bill 84;

"We, the undersigned, therefore petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to demand the Solicitor General



rewrite Bill 84 before being enacted into law and only after extensive public hearings across Ontario.”

I affix my signature as I am in agreement with the petition.

### RENT REGULATION

**Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South):** I have here a petition signed by a number of people from the South Porcupine-Schumacher area. It reads as follows:

“Whereas Mike Harris’s Conservative government of Ontario is planning to destroy the present system of rent control;

“Whereas Mike Harris and the Conservative Party made no mention of scrapping rent control during the election campaign of 1995;

“Whereas a number of Conservative candidates in ridings with high tenant populations,” like Al Leach, “campaigning during the 1995 election on a platform of protecting the current rent control system;

“Whereas the government has consulted with special interest groups representing landlords and developers while cutting funding to organizations that represent the 3.5 million tenants in this province;

“Whereas although all renters will suffer, seniors and others on fixed incomes will suffer particular hardship if rent controls are abolished;

“Whereas eliminating rent control will result in skyrocketing rents in Ontario;

“Therefore, we the undersigned call upon Premier Mike Harris, Housing Minister Al Leach and the members of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to stop this attack on the 3.5 million tenants of this province.”

I affix my name to that petition.

### PUBLIC LIBRARIES

**Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands):** I have a petition signed here on about 60 individual cards by people such as Mike Sitoski, Hank Kelly, Bruce Murray, J.F. Murray and a number of other people. It reads as follows:

“I support free public libraries as the foundation of a literate, informed and prosperous population.

“I am therefore opposed to the repeal of the Public Libraries Act, the elimination of provincial conditional grants to public libraries and the eradication of library boards and the imposition of fees for the use of public libraries.”

I have affixed my signature to it.

### NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

**Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I believe there is unanimous consent, with respect to the tentative scheduled debate pursuant to the notice of discontent that is to take place this evening, for the member for Sudbury East to be replaced by the member for Welland-Thorold. I understand there’s been unanimous consent by all three parties to that.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin):** Agreed? Agreed.

According to standing order 34(a), the member for Welland-Thorold has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Premier yesterday concerning the family support plan. The matter will be debated today at 6 pm.

1510

### ORDERS OF THE DAY

#### POLICE SERVICES AMENDMENT ACT, 1997

#### LOI DE 1997 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES SERVICES POLICIERS

Mr Runciman moved second reading of Bill 105, An Act to renew the partnership between the province, municipalities and the police and to enhance community safety / Projet de loi 105, Loi visant à renouveler le partenariat entre la province, les municipalités et la police et visant à accroître la sécurité de la collectivité.

**Hon Robert W. Runciman (Solicitor General and Minister of Correctional Services):** As Solicitor General of Ontario, I am proud to have the opportunity to speak about Bill 105, entitled An Act to renew the partnership between the province, municipalities and the police and to enhance community safety.

For many years there has been a pressing need to improve the way policing services are paid for, delivered and kept accountable to municipal taxpayers. The long-awaited amendments to the Police Services Act that we have proposed answer those needs.

Many members of the Legislative Assembly will know that I have represented the riding of Leeds-Grenville since 1981. That’s over 15 years now. In opposition I served as critic for the Ministry of Solicitor General and Correctional Services. Over my past 15 years as an MPP and as critic and now as minister, the people of Ontario have consistently demanded that common sense be restored to government. The taxpayers want to be treated fairly. They want decisions about local services to be made at the local level. They’ve said loud and clear that public institutions, and policing is no exception, must be accountable.

This government is listening and we are taking action. In December 1995 I initiated a review of policing in Ontario, the most comprehensive review of policing in almost a quarter of a century. The goal of this review was to improve the way policing is provided to the people of this province. My aim, the government’s aim, is to give municipalities and police forces the flexibility they need to reduce waste and duplication and focus on what Ontario residents want: front-line policing.

The amendments to the Police Services Act which are being proposed were not created in a vacuum. This review was conducted in consultation with police and municipal stakeholders, and consultation has been extensive.

Last June I hosted a two-day police summit to seek input from police, municipal representatives and others on the future of policing in Ontario. The police summit was attended by representatives of the Ontario Association of Police Services Boards, the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police, the Police Association of Ontario, the Ontario



Senior Officers Association, and the Association of Municipalities of Ontario.

The ministry received valuable feedback from these organizations at the summit and during follow-up meetings throughout the summer. This work was expanded upon by the Who Does What panel, which reported to the government in November. In addition, the Attorney General and I announced an independent review of civilian oversight of police which was conducted by Mr Rod McLeod. The McLeod review provided the ministry with recommendations on how to create a simpler, more efficient and effective system of civilian oversight and police accountability.

At this point, I want to touch on three main areas that Bill 105 deals with: fair financing, local flexibility in delivering and governing police services, and improved accountability.

First of all, when it comes to paying for police services, we boil it down to a question of fairness. In our view and in the view of the Who Does What emergency services panel, it is not fair that some municipalities now receive police services without direct cost to their taxpayers while others pay the full amount.

Another aspect of the fairness question has impacted on a number of OPP contract locations, where for some years now we've had several municipalities refusing to pay their policing bills because their larger neighbours were getting comparable OPP policing at no direct cost to their ratepayers. That payment default now totals approximately \$6 million owed to the OPP. I should add that it's money we intend to collect.

**Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands):** Send the sheriff.

**Hon Mr Runciman:** Hopefully, we won't have to do that.

Some 202 municipalities in Ontario, representing 85% of the province's population, pay for police services directly from municipal property taxes. The remaining 576 municipalities do not pay for policing from municipal taxes. In those municipalities policing is provided by the Ontario Provincial Police at no direct charge. The cost of providing that service is more than \$182 million a year.

In general, it is smaller rural municipalities that receive policing at no charge, but that is not always the case. For example, the village of Wheatley in Kent county has a population of about 1,500 and pays for policing through municipal taxes. The district of Muskoka has a population of 45,000 and receives policing services without charge. This is extremely unfair to the municipalities that are paying their share of policing costs.

The Provincial Auditor pointed this out in his reports in 1990 and again in 1994, but the governments of the day backed away before introducing any kind of change. In fact, the NDP government assured the Provincial Auditor that it was "committed to the principle that everyone should pay their fair share of policing costs." That was the NDP response to the 1994 Provincial Auditor's report. Despite that assurance, nothing was done.

We have listened and we are taking action. Beginning on January 1, 1998, every municipality in Ontario will be responsible for providing adequate and effective policing

and for paying their fair share for municipal tax levies. For the record, I should add that a similar system requiring municipalities to contribute to the cost of policing has been operating in the province of Quebec since the early 1990s.

With respect to policing costs, I want to remind the members of this House that this is being done in conjunction with the removal of education tax from the property tax rolls. In addition, my colleague the Attorney General recently announced amendments to the Provincial Offences Act, parts I and II of the act, and this will allow municipalities to access an estimated \$40 million in fine revenues from things like speeding which flow directly from police operations. The government's reinvestment strategy will also ensure that no municipality is unfairly burdened by the new charge.

These measures taken together will help make sure that municipalities are able to pay their fair share for policing.

I should point out that these changes are being well received. An editorial in the London Free Press said, "Removing a subsidy most municipalities don't get is the right thing to do." The Windsor Star called these changes "straightforward and equitable."

I met with delegates at the Rural Ontario Municipal Association convention this week, spoke to them, answered their questions, met delegations all afternoon, and the changes are being well received.

Certainly there are some questions and concerns surrounding how this will transpire and we understand those and we're addressing them as best we can and as quickly as we can, but I want to assure members of the House that from the reaction that I've been able to receive and read about and hear about right across the province, these proposals with respect to everyone paying their fair share for policing are being well received.

I want to point out that the changes will not mean every municipality will have to organize its own separate police force. In fact, the second major provision in the bill that I want to speak to is designed specifically to give local governments the flexibility they need to make decisions about local services.

This government believes that local needs are best understood by local officials who are accountable for the delivery of services in their communities. That's why under Bill 105 the majority of members on police services boards will be appointed by the municipality and municipalities will be given the authority to set police budgets, which I might add was received with a very strong round of applause at the ROMA convention this week.

The system of municipal control over police budgets we're proposing in this bill is similar to the budget process used in Alberta, British Columbia, New Brunswick and Saskatchewan.

Municipalities will have options for local choice in the delivery of police services to their community. For instance, they can decide to continue with OPP service and be billed on an actual cost basis; they can contract with the OPP directly; they can join with a neighbouring municipality or municipalities to establish a joint OPP contract and a joint police services board; they have the option of entering into a contract with a neighbouring



police force to provide certain specialized police services; or finally, they can join with another municipality to form a new police service. But regardless of the option chosen, public safety will not be compromised.

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Consistent with the Who Does What panel's recommendation, the proposed legislation establishes the core functions that must be provided by a police service. Those core functions are crime prevention, law enforcement, assistance to victims, maintenance of public safety and emergency response.

For the first time, in the interest of public safety, the Ministry of the Solicitor General and Correctional Services will clearly define the term "adequate policing," and we'll do this in regulation pursuant to the bill. This will establish benchmarks for a level of police service that will ensure effective protection for every community in Ontario.

The third and final area I would like to address is the improved system of police oversight that has been developed as part of Bill 105. It's clear to everyone interested in police oversight that the current system doesn't work. Certainly police and municipal stakeholders told us during our extensive consultations over the last year that the current system is complex, bureaucratic and slow. I know from the inquiries in my office that very few people understand the current system, including members of this assembly.

The oversight system in Ontario is confusing to the complainant, and costly and time-consuming to all taxpayers. Right now Ontario has four different agencies overseeing the police at an annual cost of almost \$8 million. I don't usually quote this individual on a regular basis but former Metro police services board chair, Susan Eng, said in a 1993 speech:

"In Ontario, I think we overdid it. We have no less than four external agencies and three internal units that monitor the conduct of police officers. In my opinion, some of these agencies would've been unnecessary if police boards took on the responsibility for holding police forces to account."

In fact, we are doing just what Ms Eng suggested. In order to remedy these problems, the proposed legislation will merge the existing police complaints and discipline bodies into —

**Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: This is a very important bill and it should be very important to the government that ran on a law-and-order platform and they do not have a quorum.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr Gilles Morin):** Would you please check if there is a quorum.

**Acting Clerk Assistant (Mr Todd Decker):** A quorum is not present, Speaker.

*The Deputy Speaker ordered the bells rung.*

**Acting Clerk Assistant:** A quorum is now present, Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Minister.

**Hon Mr Runciman:** I was speaking to the issue of police oversight and the fact that we have addressed, I think, virtually all the concerns, and not simply those involved in policing, but community organizations. I know there are some difficulties and some concerns that

still surround the oversight proposal, but we are attempting to address those in a timely fashion.

I indicated that in order to remedy these problems, the proposed legislation will merge the existing police complaints and discipline bodies into a modern, streamlined and simpler system. It's more responsive and accountable to complainants. The four existing agencies will be merged into two, which will save taxpayers \$3 million each year. These savings will be realized by ending administrative overlap and duplication in the oversight system, not by compromising service and accountability.

The Ontario Civilian Commission on Police Services, or OCCPS, will be reconstituted to deal with budget appeal issues in the context of adequate delivery of police services. It will also provide the appellate function for complaints about police conduct.

The oversight system we're proposing under this bill is based on the police complaints and police discipline system in Alberta. The new system will make filing a police complaint simpler and more accessible. A complainant only needs to write a letter. There are no forms to fill out, as is currently the case. The letter can be delivered by fax, by mail, in person or by an agent to either the police station or directly to the new Ontario Civilian Commission on Police Services. As I've indicated, the new system will be more accountable, with a new element, a 30-day initial response time set for public complaints. Complaints will be encouraged to be resolved at the local level, while preserving the provincial role in ensuring police accountability in matters of public trust and safety.

Under the new system, a complainant who is not satisfied or who disagrees with the manner in which a complaint is being handled by the police can ask the civilian commission to review the matter. Upon receiving a request for a review, the civilian commission shall review the matter, taking into account any material provided by the complainant or the police. After this review has been completed, or on its own motion, the civilian commission may confirm the local decision or may direct the chief of police to process the complaint as it specifies, or assign the investigation of the complaint to another police service. In many ways the new system will be fairer, more credible and more accountable for the police and for the complainant.

Finally, the independence and impartiality of serious investigations will be maintained through the continuation of the special investigations unit, which will remain under the jurisdiction of the Attorney General. Again, we're encouraged by the positive feedback we're receiving concerning these proposed changes to police oversight and governance. In fact, I received a letter from the London Urban Alliance on Race Relations saying: "We are most impressed with the changes being made. You are keeping your promises to the people of Ontario." That is the London Urban Alliance on Race Relations.

Before concluding my remarks, I want to briefly address a few concerns I've heard over the past seven or eight years about police presence in rural Ontario, concerns which we, now that we're in government, are doing something about. For instance, we've marked over



100 police cars that were previously unmarked in order to increase visibility of police in rural Ontario. The OPP — and members may think this is not a significant matter, but I think the fact that we've had so many cars in the rural areas and having a police car in terms of visibility —

**Mr Gerretsen:** Is this part of the bill?

**Hon Mr Runciman:** It's all related to policing. Simply, the visibility aspect is a deterrent, especially in terms of youth crime.

The OPP now has a program which is moving over 300 sergeants out from behind their desks and into patrol cars. We think that is a very significant element. We've increased 24-hour coverage in rural Ontario from, believe it or not, approximately 38% in 1990 to over 80% in 1996. As an example of this in my area, prior to clustering with Brockville, Westport was provided with only 18 hours of on-duty OPP police service. It now receives 24-hour service.

1530

The review in October 1996 indicated that in the village of Westport in rural Ontario there has been a 7% decrease in break-and-enters, a 20% decrease in thefts, a 33% increase in driving offence charges — all a result of proactive policing in rural Ontario.

Now with these new responsibilities being given to municipalities under Bill 105, our municipal partners in rural Ontario will have a real voice in how policing is conducted in their own municipality. If local taxpayers want more coverage in certain areas at certain hours, then the local municipality will call the shots. The point I want to make is that the community is involved and will have a say in policing.

In closing, I want to say that I strongly believe that the changes we are embarking upon will lead to fairness for taxpayers, empower local governments to make local decisions about policing and improve the system of police oversight and accountability. I believe these changes will lead to much-improved policing across Ontario and a safer province for us, our children and our grandchildren. Thank you very much.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Questions or comments? The member for Kingston and The Islands.

**Mr Gerretsen:** Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. I'm pleased to respond to the Solicitor General, and I'm sure that you will allow the debate of this matter to be as broad as possible since at least the last five minutes of his speech had nothing to do with the bill itself.

It's interesting, having been a former police commissioner for some eight years and being chair in my own community for about three years, I'm very concerned about the provincial oversight of police forces. This is a matter of concern to people in our communities. We're obviously going to study the changes he's making in that regard very closely because I think it is important that the general public out there has a mechanism whereby it can deal with complaints it may have about the police services it's getting in its community or that it may be involved in with the police in one way or another.

The other thing of course that I'm pleased to see, and I don't mind admitting this, is the fact that the majority of our police commission can now be set by the local

council and that the councils will finally control the budgets. The downside to that is that \$180 million has been downloaded upon municipalities in this community police financing program. It's kind of interesting that the minister in his speech didn't talk about the \$180-million downloading at all.

It's kind of like telling the municipalities: "We'll give you a little bit more authority but at the same time, here's the \$180-million bill that goes along with it." I wish he would have paid a little bit closer attention to that as well. The thing you've got to remember is that over 500 municipalities, as he said in his own speech, right now don't pay anything for policing at all and it is going to be a concern to those municipalities as to how exactly they're going to pay for this.

We look forward to debate on this matter and certainly to the public meetings which undoubtedly will follow in dealing with this bill.

**Mrs Boyd:** I'm happy to comment on the minister's introductory speech. One of the things that certainly leaps out at one from what the minister said was the lack of consultation that has been held with interested citizens groups about the issue around civilian oversight and also around what really constitutes local accountability.

It is fine for the minister to say municipalities have been asking for a better say, a better handle on police budgets since they pay those budgets, but, in truth, what worries police chiefs and the rank-and-file police officers is that, given the kind of load that this government has placed on municipalities and given the kinds of comments in reports like the famed KPMG report that says one of the ways Metro could save money is by reducing its police force, there is clear apprehension among police people in this province, as well as citizens groups, that this is going to result in a lower level of policing.

The minister says there will be standards set by regulation. We all know that regulations are made by the government without necessary consultation and are simply announced to people. This minister has shown himself unwilling to meet with concerned citizen groups. He thinks the only people he has to meet with and has to please are those involved in police services themselves in one way or another. It is quite frustrating for those who believe that our police services are not necessarily serving the interests of our diverse communities to have a Solicitor General who says he is proud of a report that has been devised without consultation with those interested citizen groups.

**Mrs Margaret Marland (Mississauga South):** I would like to commend the Solicitor General for the content, the drafting of this legislation. It's very interesting to hear people in this House, some of whom were members of previous governments, argue against straightforward, commonsense solutions. I find it amazing, when I look at what the review of the Solicitor General's office covered, when I look at some of these areas such as "providing more effective and cost-efficient service delivery" — I mean, who can argue against the necessity for something as basic in principle as that is? — "and ensuring that all municipalities contribute to the cost of police service in their communities."



It's only fair that all municipalities contribute to the cost of police services in their community, and it's only fair that those communities have a direct input into what those services are. As a former Peel regional councillor and a city councillor for seven years, I know what it's like to sit there approving police budgets and going through line by line and making the direct decisions about what kind of service is needed in that community I had the privilege to represent.

When we're looking at the revisions this legislation brings in, it is dealing with fiscal accountability at the local level and, most important, it's providing police services with greater flexibility in deploying resources. Who knows better how to deploy the resources being funded than the people at the local level?

I can assure you, if the taxpayers in this province want anything, they want equity. I congratulate the Solicitor General for this legislation.

**Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold):** One of the observations that has to be made is that here we have Bill 105, which has to be discussed in conjunction with, among other things, the amendments to the Provincial Offences Act. Clearly, there's some modest design here.

One of the goals, clearly, of what is companion legislation — the amendments to the Provincial Offences Act — is to put the police in a position where they're going to be the tax collectors of a municipality. It's a recognition of the incredible downloading of costs on to municipalities, the transfer of responsibilities. The Solicitor General is very specific about the fact that it's municipal councils, municipal authorities now which will determine police budgets, municipal councils which are increasingly cash-strapped and which are burdened with the ever-growing costs of general welfare assistance, nursing homes, day care, child care, public health, public transit, funding of libraries.

Our police officers are going to be compelled to go out there — we commented approximately a year ago or so about the ludicrous prospect of police officers having to go out there conducting raffles and bake sales to finance effective policing.

*Interjection.*

**Mr Kormos:** Yes, very much a Mississippi model, made in Mississippi, if you will. Police officers, because of the transfer of responsibilities for the prosecution of and the receipt of the revenues from fines imposed for any number of provincial offences, are going to be forced — rather than doing the sort of work they know they ought to be doing, police officers across Ontario, the Niagara region included, are going to be forced into engaging in provincial offences enforcement for the sole purpose of generating revenues for municipalities that are not going to be able to afford to adequately police themselves.

1540

**The Deputy Speaker:** Minister, you have two minutes.

**Hon Mr Runciman:** I'll try to respond to those comments. The member for Kingston and The Islands said that Bill Davis didn't do this, John Robarts didn't do this. I won't embarrass anyone, but one of the first people who crossed the floor and shook my hand after introduction of this bill was a member of the Liberal Party, who

shook my hand with respect to the requirement for all municipalities to start contributing to the cost of policing. He said: "You're the first government that's done this. I was promised 30 years ago by Roy McMurtry that this was going to happen." Every government subsequent to that made the promise. We're the government that is dealing with it. I suggest that because of its political volatility, it wasn't dealt with in the past.

**Mr Gerretsen:** I agree with part of that: You are the first government to ask for \$182 million.

**Hon Mr Runciman:** The \$182 million is the actual cost; that's all we're asking for, not a premium.

The member for London Centre talked about consultation. There has been significant consultation and there is ongoing consultation. I've never closed my door; it's open to hear people's views and listen to their concerns. I met with a coalition last week which represented something like 20 groups —

**Mrs Boyd:** For the first time; they've been asking for two years.

**Hon Mr Runciman:** No, it's not the first time I've met. I've met with groups before, and that's a fact. I've committed to meeting with them again before the legislation goes out to public hearings, and responded to all their concerns in a letter I signed today.

Our commitment to review oversight has been there for some time — we made it as an opposition party — to take a look at a system which very few people understand.

The member for — I've forgotten his riding — Welland-Thorold — how could I forget that? It's really almost heart-wrenching to hear about his concern for taxpayers, given that the NDP was the party that brought in something like 32 tax increases —

**The Deputy Speaker:** Thank you.

**Hon Mr Runciman:** Mr Speaker, do I have more time?

**The Deputy Speaker:** No. Further debate?

**Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines):** Mr Speaker, I request unanimous consent from the House to postpone the leadoff comments of our critic until a later time, and I will simply speak for half an hour.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Is it agreed? Agreed.

**Mr Bradley:** I thank the House for that agreement.

**Mrs Marland:** Now you have to be nice to us.

**Mr Bradley:** The member for Mississauga South says that as a result I have to be nice to the government. I can't think of when I'm not nice to the government. Sometimes I'm not nice to what the government is doing; in other words, I'm critical of what the government's doing. I seldom allow that to creep into my viewpoint of the individuals who deliver the service, which I think is probably the way it should be. Actually, someone came into my constituency office and said I was too nice to the government or I was always making jokes or something and wasn't serious, this person said. This person was critical of me because I didn't stop you from allowing shopping on Boxing Day and said that if I were serious instead of being humorous from time to time in the House, I probably could have stopped the government from doing so.



**Hon Mr Runciman:** Municipalities can pass a bylaw.

**Mr Bradley:** You're right. Municipalities can pass a bylaw, says the Solicitor General, so perhaps this person will go to the municipality. Anyway, he was very critical of me on that occasion and I suspect on other occasions.

I have some comments to offer in a general sense. I always like to put a bill in the context of the entire government program. I think that's the best thing to do when we're talking about basic principles. Once again we have a bill which is to a certain extent motivated by the government's desire to give a tax cut to the richest people in our society; that is, the people who make the highest income are the people who are going to get the most back from the tax cut, so presumably they could go to Switzerland on a holiday or buy more RSPs or something of that nature. The lower-income people benefit, in terms of real dollars, substantially less and lose a lot of services. I see this in the context of that transfer of responsibilities and financial onus from the provincial government to the local municipalities.

When Bill 26 was on and people worried about police services at that time in Niagara Falls — and my friend from Welland-Thorold was present at the time — I was questioning a municipal official whose municipality had endorsed to a certain extent certain provisions of Bill 26. I asked that individual, "When your municipality endorsed this portion, did you realize that the Ontario government was cutting income taxes, which do not take into account an individual's ability to pay, and offloading on to municipalities, thereby increasing the property tax, which certainly does not take into account a person's ability to pay, and that all the criticism for any increased taxes or decrease in services would go to the municipality as opposed to the provincial government?" That person said that had he realized this, they probably would not have endorsed that aspect of Bill 26. That just goes to show what is not available in terms of information for people.

In context of the coverage of these events, I'm very concerned that we now have a diminished number of people covering items and events here at Queen's Park. We had an announcement earlier this week that unfortunately over 150 employees of Baton Broadcasting would lose their jobs and that the bureau here was almost wiped out except for two individuals. One would say: "What difference does that make? Isn't that downsizing? Isn't that the way Ontario is?" I'm not getting into the individual business of a particular company in this case; I am saying, in the context of the coverage of issues of the day, that it makes it much more difficult if there's only one person here as a reporter and one as a camera person to cover events at Queen's Park. Therefore what might happen is that the government's story of the day or some frivolous resolution might get coverage when there are more important items before the House.

That works both ways; I recognize that. Sometimes there may be something many on the government side would consider to be frivolous that the opposition raises and might get covered, or the government, one of the two. The point is that there are many secondary issues or secondary stories out there that cannot be covered as we see a diminishing of the number of reporters, journalists here at Queen's Park.

I personally have a little bit of a concern when I look up in the press gallery. The present Speaker is unable to see this except when he's in his own chair. But we don't see many people in the press gallery, and that's because there are television sets in all the offices now. I think what reporters miss, regardless of what side you sit on in the House, are the faces that are made, the looks on the faces of various people as things happen, sometimes an astute interjection or sometimes simply the body language of somebody asking or answering a question. To cover it, it's much better to be here in person to see that. It's much more convenient to be in one's office, I understand, but it's much better to be in the House itself. The Minister of Education and Training, and secondary education, agrees with that particular sentiment.

I look upon this bill as yet another downloading on municipalities, a transfer of responsibilities on to municipalities from the provincial government, and I do not look upon that with favour. Many of the services and responsibilities that are being downloaded to the local municipality are those services which are likely to rise in terms of their cost or be unpredictable in terms of their costs. Those that the province has taken on are those which are levelling off.

I'm sure there are many people in the province who applauded when they first heard the news, and it was well orchestrated, that the property tax would no longer have to be used for the purpose of education. A significant number of people would have applauded that day. They didn't hear the second part of it. The first day they would have applauded; the second day or the third day, when they started to hear what they were getting, they might have changed their minds because the cost of education, because of declining enrolment, is likely to level off or perhaps even decrease. It's a more predictable cost. It depends on where you are in the province, because some areas have growth in terms of population, some do not.

1550

The province knew what it was doing when it took on that responsibility and then dumped other responsibilities on the municipalities, such as long-term care, such as care for seniors. The seniors homes now, I was reading a report in the St Catharines Standard the other day that said perhaps there was going to be privatization of some of the homes in Niagara. Would the regional municipality of Niagara, which gives excellent care in its seniors homes, be able to continue to do so? Already we're seeing cutbacks in that area and we're going to see further cutbacks.

They've dumped the cost of ambulance services on local municipalities. Now we see a major corporation coming in from the United States, a giant corporation called Rural/Metro Corp. I would like to share with you, because I know you'd be interested, what would happen in New York state, just across the border, if you had to get into an ambulance in New York state as compared to in Stratford, Ontario, or Mitchell or any of the other important communities in your area.

In New York state, to get into an ambulance for Rural/Metro Corp, you would have to pay US\$218 for them to open the door and put you in, and you get basic life support services for that. If you get advanced life



support services you pay \$350. I presume that would be if you're having a heart attack or some other serious affliction of an emergency nature; that's a \$350 ride. If you think that's all you have to pay, it isn't. You pay \$5.45 per mile and you pay extra for equipment such as oxygen and intravenous, which I think I saw was something like \$26.80 for those services. That could be a very expensive ride in an ambulance.

When I see this company coming into Ontario, I can't help but believe that the only reason they'd come into Ontario is that they believe they're going to be able to do something similar here. The rules don't allow for that now. I think it's \$45 that one would pay — the Minister of Health would call it a copayment and I call it a user fee — for an ambulance ride here in Ontario today. That's a flat rate, as I understand it. That in itself is a bit of an imposition. I guess for other, longer rides it could be more. That's for an emergency, I believe.

The point I'm making is that I don't think this corporation would possibly be entering Ontario unless it felt there were new opportunities. You're thinking to yourself as you look at the bill, "How does this relate to the bill which is before the House?" It relates in this way: The police are now going to be competing for those same dollars locally because they're going to have to assume much more of the costs. In the smaller towns, villages, if you will, that have had Ontario Provincial Police service of a high quality, they will now have to pay for those services. That's going to be a new cost for those municipalities.

If they have to pay for those services, if they have to pay for the cost of general welfare, if they have to pay for the cost of family benefits — which is mother's allowance — if they have to pay for public health care, if they have to pay for senior citizens homes, if they have to pay for social housing in their area, one wonders how they're going to be able to cope with ambulance services. I remember when I was asking this question, the president of Rural/Metro Corp said something to the effect that he wanted to get into the Ontario marketplace.

There's a substantial difference, I think you will agree with me, between the attitude of Canadians towards health care and the attitude of Americans. That really transcends, for the most part, political affiliations. I suspect that even among the government back bench and all government members who happen to admire the Americanization of many parts of our society, the one area where many, even government members, would draw the line is that of health care services.

I was flabbergasted this afternoon that the Minister of Health would not guarantee that there would not be an increase in the rates for ambulance rides, that there would not be these additional fees, that one would not have to get the credit card out before getting into the ambulance and that it wouldn't be delisted as a service, and I see this happening. I see this happening because of bills of this kind because police services, more and more, will cost the local municipalities.

I know that some of the local police chiefs, in fact probably all of them, are very concerned about this. They heard the Solicitor General and Minister of Correctional Services, who they always thought was a hard-liner on

law-and-order issues, they knew he was supportive in opposition of adequate resources for police, and now they're wondering why he would bring about a provision in a bill which would allow for a lowering of that level of policing. Despite the fact that the words in the bill say that local municipalities must do certain things, they may not have those financial resources because, again, the police are now going to be competing for far more responsibilities that municipalities have, and we can see a decline in police services.

He mentions getting people — this had not to do with the bill but the minister did mention it — having more people on the front line out there. I want to say I agree with him on that. I want to say I think everybody would agree that that is the case, but I see more and more that the police resources are going to be stretched to the limit. I listened to the Attorney General a while ago say that — I'm not quoting him directly but I believe I'm paraphrasing him appropriately. I saw in the newspaper where he said perhaps the courts won't be dealing with these less important crimes because the courts are clogged, so we've got to deal with the more important crimes.

Mayor Giuliani in New York City in fact has adopted a different attitude, which interestingly enough some people may have sniffed at early and dismissed. Well, it seems to be working. Maybe it needs more analysis, maybe it needs more of a careful look at it, but I'm telling you, it seems to be working. It seems to me that if you've stopped the crimes at the time when people are in the stage of petty theft and petty crimes, the chances are you're going to stop these people from becoming involved in more serious crimes. As far as I can see as an outsider, I'm initially impressed with the results that Mayor Giuliani is achieving in New York City in that regard. The jury is still out on it, but we will see.

I've mentioned the tax cut, which I try to mention in each one of my addresses, because I think everything must be looked at in light of the tax cut. I can't put words in the mouth of the Minister of Municipal Affairs because that would be unfair, but he's the Minister of Municipal Affairs and I'm thinking he doesn't want to be looked upon with hatred — that's a strong word — or dislike by the municipalities, and I think in his heart of hearts he probably is saying, "Why would our government possibly cut the income tax, which does not take into account a person's ability to pay, and thrust the cost on to the municipal property tax?" In his riding, by the way, that tax is going to be increasing rather substantially in certain areas as a result of another bill to do with actual value assessment. I can't help but believe that in his heart of hearts the Minister of Municipal Affairs probably would prefer that tax cut not to be proceeded with and allow the local municipalities not to have to drastically cut services.

I should say for Hansard in his defence, he nods no.

*Interjection.*

**Mr Bradley:** He says we're not doing it fast enough. I think most people in our society today in Ontario are saying if there's one criticism they have it's that this government is moving too quickly and too drastically and not looking at the consequences of its actions. That's



even among those who support you, because I have friends — not all my friends are Liberals or New Democrats or have no affiliation — I have some friends who are Conservative supporters and I consider them to be personal friends.

I hear them say to me: "You know, we agree with some of the things this government is doing, but it's moving so quickly. Tell them to take their time. Tell them to assess things. Tell them to be like the Conservative Party of a few years ago that was a cautious, careful party, not one which is a bulldozer, which heads in one direction knocking everything down and breaking the furniture, but rather one which carefully analyses the impact of all government policies." If you had that, I think you'd have some considerable support among even those who don't consider themselves to be Conservatives.

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What you've done successfully, I must say, and I don't say this as a point of pride with you, is you've found some enemies out there to point to, to get at, who have been resented by others in society, and you've been successful. I was talking to a person the other day, a person who I would normally have thought would not be a supporter of this government. This person is in the private sector. He's a worker in the private sector, in construction. He said to me: "One thing that government's done, they finally got those teachers. They finally are putting those teachers in their place."

If you look all over society, that's what happens. You see, I understand the richest people in our society supporting this government, I really do. If I were extremely wealthy and if I had no social conscience — there are wealthy people who have a social conscience, so they would be concerned — I would be all for this government, because they would be doing everything that I wanted to do. But I don't think a lot of people are that way. The people I am surprised at who support the government are those who will eventually be the victims of this government. They or their children or their grandparents will be the victims of this government.

What you've done is picked out people who people resent — people on welfare, teachers, public servants and some others — and you have pointed fingers at those people and said, "We're going to put them in their place." There's some applause when that happens. I guess politically that's successful but I don't know in the long run whether that's — well, I know in the long run that's not good for our society.

#### *Interjection.*

**Mr Bradley:** I know the member for Wentworth-North must be beside himself when he sees the results of the referendum. Here's an individual who wanted to represent his people, wanted to say, "The Harris government knows how to look after rural people, knows how to look after small town people." So they had a referendum in the Wentworth North area and the municipalities adjacent to the city of Hamilton — and this government likes referenda usually; when it suits their purposes, they like them; when it doesn't, they don't — and 95% or 96% of the people rejected the proposal they had for restructuring in that area. Yet the government of Ontario is imposing its will on that particular group of municipalities.

**Mr Tom Froese (St Catharines-Brock):** What does this have to do with Bill 105?

**Mr Bradley:** Whenever I say something that strikes a soft spot in the government, one of the government members says, "What does this have to do with the bill?" And my friend from St Catharines-Brock is always assiduous in his efforts to try to get me back on topic. I want to comply with his wishes to see that as we head into the last half of my speech this afternoon.

I look at this in the context of — you say, okay, the fire department, and you have the police bill. Well, let me tell you what the government wanted to do. They wanted to have very few hearings on this bill and on the bill affecting fire safety in Ontario. They wanted to have a committee throw it together, travel across the province just to a few centres and have a little bit of an input, a show, if I could use that appropriately.

We in the Liberal Party said, "No, you can't have that." We believe the firefighters are right, that there should be hearings in places like Niagara Falls and Windsor and Ottawa and London and Sudbury and Thunder Bay and a number of other communities around the province so we could hear from people on what they think of the fire safety bill, which affects the livelihood of firefighters who have given so much to our province over the years.

They wanted to combine that with this bill and send it across the province. I don't think you could do justice to this piece of legislation and the firefighters' legislation if you combined them and sent them only to a couple of centres.

I think once you get out of the precinct, out of this building, you find out that a lot of people have different opinions. I know some of the government members who are not from Metropolitan Toronto have expressed the view from time to time that the world does not begin and end at the borders of Metropolitan Toronto, or now I guess the greater Toronto area, that in fact there are other views. This is not to denigrate the views expressed in this community; they are very valid, very interesting to hear, but we should also hear the views of people who are elsewhere in the province.

This is in the context as well of the education bill, because these are all the Who Does What bills. They're only going to about half a dozen communities to hear people deal with the education bill and it has great implications. There may be thousands of employees of boards of education. We're not talking about the top people, making a living wage; we're talking about the lower-paid people, some of the people who are clerical, some of the people who keep our schools clean and well-maintained. They could lose their jobs. They could be privatized. They could be put out there and there could be some service that just comes in at \$8 an hour and does the work, and they lose all those benefits. So those people are concerned.

We're removing any responsibility for local boards of education. The only people who will be able to afford to run for these positions will be rich Tories. The units are going to be so large that they're the only people who are going to be able to afford it. Look at most of your municipalities and you'll see that the Tories have a hard



time getting elected at the ward level, but at regional levels or at county levels, where you have to spend more money or be a well-known, prominent person in the community, then the Conservatives tend to be more successful. The larger units tend to be more right-wing than central. It would be worth an analysis of that to see if that's true. That's an observation I make.

**Mrs Boyd:** It certainly doesn't work in Perth county.

**Mr Bradley:** Not in Perth county, no.

It's an observation I make and I see it in so many places. I think it would be worthy of a study by some university, but heaven knows, they won't have the money because they've been cut so much by the provincial government that they couldn't possibly do this kind of study successfully.

**Mrs Boyd:** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: There is no quorum in the House and this is a very important bill.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson):** Would you check for quorum, please.

**Acting Clerk Assistant:** A quorum is not present, Speaker.

*The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.*

**Acting Clerk Assistant:** A quorum is now present, Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** The Chair recognizes the member for St Catharines.

**Mr Bradley:** I worry as well, in the context of these police services, that you're going to force municipalities into getting into innovative ways through the Provincial Offences Act, which the police have to enforce, to gain money.

That reminds me of Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia and places like that, particularly in days gone by. I've never been to those places in terms of driving through those little communities, but it reminds me of what people tell me about them, where the local sheriff has some innovative ways of collecting money, where you have a speed limit which says — they're in miles per hour — 80 miles per hour, and at the bottom of the hill it'll say 30 miles per hour, and they happen to have two police cars at the bottom of the hill to enforce the limit.

I hope that would never happen in Ontario, but I'm going to tell you that municipalities desperate for funding might well be involved in this kind of practice. I could understand it. I wouldn't condone it, but I could understand it happening, because they won't have the money to carry out their responsibilities.

My community will have a hard time coping with some of the additional police costs and the other costs, because we've had some plants that have closed in our area. As I said in this House, I could see it coming. Some people are wondering how I knew. You can see these things coming eventually.

Foster Wheeler has announced it's closing out its operation in St Catharines. The Mott's company, Cadbury Schweppes, is closing its operation in our community. A portion of Court Industries has closed out its operation and moved to the US. General Motors has gone from about 8,500 to 9,000 employees to about 5,300 employees in our community of St Catharines. Kelsey-Hayes has closed its operation in our community. There's been a general downsizing and some other plants have closed in our area.

You're going to say that has to take away some of the local assessment. When you download, when you dump additional new onerous responsibilities on to municipalities, it means local taxes are going to have to go up and individual taxpayers out there, individual homeowners, apartment dwellers, condominium owners and other businesses are going to have to assume an increasing load as we lose that particular assessment.

That's why, when you have this downloading on to municipalities, you're going to see a lowering of those services or a substantial increase — I repeat, a substantial increase — in the local tax levy, which is going to be very difficult.

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It was mentioned as well that there are some regulations that can go along with this bill. I'm worried about those regulations. The public should know that regulations are not debated in this Legislature, only legislation. They just happen to slide out one day and appear somewhere, and they affect people. We have to watch for those regulations. The member for Lincoln is busy getting rid of the regulations affecting the environment and consumer protection and so on. We should be retaining those and worrying about the new regulations they're going to bring in under this police act.

I'm also worried that there was very late consultation with citizens' groups in regard to the complaints operation. There was extensive consultation with the police forces — that's as it should be; there should be extensive consultation there — but very late in the game some of the citizens' organizations were brought in and one could understand that they believed they were not going to be listened to if they were coming in so late in the game.

I also worry about this happening: My friend the member for Ottawa East raised the issue — this is raising funds — of private sector people paying money into the police so they will protect certain services. I think the car dealers' association in Ottawa was paying money to the police force so it could put resources towards theft of automobiles and things of that nature. I really am worried about that. One starts to think, "Do you only get service when you're prepared to put additional money in that coffer?" I think that's not good.

Lastly, this is all in the context of this government closing hospitals in the Niagara region and other places. In St Catharines, the Hotel Dieu Hospital is under the gun, as is a Fort Erie hospital, Douglas Memorial, Niagara-on-the-Lake hospital, Port Colborne hospital and West Lincoln Memorial in Grimsby. All these hospitals, because of a \$44-million cut in provincial funding and further cuts to come, are going to be closed unless this government changes its mind. I hope the Premier lives up to his promise when he said, "I have no plans to close hospitals."

**The Acting Speaker:** Comments and questions?

**Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma):** I want to congratulate my friend from St Catharines for his presentation on this very important piece of legislation.

I note he has talked about the effects in his area, particularly in the Niagara region, but I want to ask him if he is aware that the government has characterized this piece of legislation as an attempt to bring equity in rural



Ontario, where you have some areas of rural Ontario, some municipalities, that do not pay for OPP service because historically, years ago, they may have had their own police forces, and when the then provincial government decided to consolidate police services across the province, it promised to provide police service gratis to those local municipalities.

Then there are some other small rural municipalities that do have their own police forces or pay for OPP service. There really is no difference now between the level of service the two types of municipalities receive. However, this is not an attempt to bring equity and ensure enhanced police services for these rural communities, but rather it's simply a dumping of a significant new cost to very small municipalities that are also having new services transferred from the provincial government to their own local property tax base. I wonder how many small municipalities are going to be able to afford to provide the cost. I understand the OPP is now visiting these municipalities and telling them that if they don't make an agreement, they'll simply get a bill in January 1998 that they will have to pay. I don't know what happens if they can't pay. Surely it won't mean that they will lose police services.

**Mr John O'Toole (Durham East):** It's a real privilege today to get up and respond to the comments made by the member for St Catharines, but more important, to support our Minister Runciman's courage and commitment to police services and to the very controversial enhancements to the Police Services Act and safety in our community.

Bill 105 to me really has got three main parts to it: Municipal responsibilities have been discussed and debated for many years. Members who have been here for some time would know that. But "[t]he bill allows municipalities to amalgamate, share or create joint boards with more than one...municipality." So this is taking some responsibility and, again, making wise choices and wise use of taxpayers' money. They "may contract with the Solicitor General" to continue with the Ontario Provincial Police if that's who services their community today.

Municipal governance of police forces: Again, because the municipalities are the payors, their appointments to the board make very good sense. I commend the minister for allowing them to have the appointments and depoliticizing those appointments that today some might argue are counterproductive to the delivery of police services boards in Ontario.

I think the police services oversight is also an important change — but to recognize that the complaint process is still there. It's been streamlined and it's been modernized. It says that the new part V provides for the following: "Complaints may be made by a member of the public about the...police" or police services. In fact, it goes on to say that those complaints must be dealt with in 30 days. It's introducing a bit of accountability and timeliness into the process of complaints which we all know can go on endlessly and perhaps not be as responsive to the person with the complaint. Really this government in this whole thing is being responsive, as close to the level of delivery of service as possible.

**Mr Gerretsen:** Just a comment on the last member's comment: By making all these decisions locally, you're not necessarily depoliticizing them. As a matter of fact, you may be politicizing them a lot more.

It's interesting what's been happening this week. This week we've had introduced in this House or for second reading bills that have done nothing but download on municipalities. I think we should once again tell the taxpayers of Ontario what's happened here: \$182 million — as a matter of fact, the Solicitor General corrected me; it was not \$180 million — of community police financing has now been downloaded to municipalities.

Yesterday or the day before we heard about the property assessment services that are being downloaded on municipalities at a cost of \$120 million. The day before it was the fire services and sewer and water inspections of \$10 million that are being downloaded on municipalities. Of course we haven't heard at all about the biggest downloading of them all, or the second biggest: the social housing one of \$890 million that the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing is involved in.

It will be interesting: Once all this downloading has taken place, will there still be a Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing left? Since the municipalities are going to do it all, they're going to pay for it all in both the housing and municipal affairs areas, it may be that the minister's department will be totally gone. The province will have totally washed its hands of any responsibility to the taxpayers of Ontario, so what's the minister going to do then? He won't have a thing to do and he can resign and retire. The better thing he can do, and I've asked him this three or four times today, he can go into committee room 151 right now and do the right thing and withdraw the megacity bill, as so many people who have given testimony there over the last couple of weeks or so have urged him to do. Do the right thing, Minister. Go down there and withdraw the bill.

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**Mrs Boyd:** It's always a pleasure to respond to a speech by the member for St Catharines. We all should recognize that he has reason to be very concerned about policing and about civilian oversight of police and the problems that can go wrong in policing. After all, the Niagara Regional Police were the subject of one of the longest commissions of inquiry into various citizen complaints and indeed provincial complaints that had gone on there. He's well aware of what a touchy issue this is in a community.

Civilian oversight is an extraordinarily important issue to the citizens. The member for Durham East says that this is going to streamline the process of citizen complaints. Well, we know what this government means. We know what "streamline" is code for. "Streamline" is code for shutting down complaints. It's exactly what you're doing in the cutting of the red tape with the Human Rights Code. In every other area, when you want to shut down citizen complaints and make it impossible for people to deal with problems they're facing, what do you do? Your codeword: You streamline, you make more efficient.

What you've done here is that every complaint has to go to a chief of police. We know what chiefs of police



say about any wrongdoing of someone on the force. They deny there's any wrongdoing. We have example after example of it.

The member for St Catharines is quite right to say that people are very concerned about civilian oversight of the police and very concerned about the wrongdoing that has been shown again and again to be of concern to citizens.

Police are only as good as their accountability to the people whom they serve, and the people whom they serve are those who are the most vulnerable. It is important for any civilian oversight process to take account of the most vulnerable and not streamline them out of the process.

**The Acting Speaker:** The member for St Catharines has two minutes to respond.

**Mr Bradley:** I welcome the comments from the members for Algoma, Durham East, Kingston and The Islands, and London Centre. The member for Algoma I think appropriately recognized that I made comment about the local municipalities, the small municipalities that are now going to be stung for the cost of policing in their areas, some who, before, counted upon our Ontario Provincial Police because they haven't had the tax base to be able to pay for this. They haven't got the industrial or commercial tax base that would allow them to have the kind of policing they would like to have, and they're going to be stung by yet another cost from this government.

I was pleased that the member for Durham East intervened, even though he spent most of his time defending the Solicitor General. What I want to say to him is that the government talks a good line when it comes to law and order but doesn't provide the resources. Here's a case where you're going to dump on to the municipalities — as my friend from Kingston and The Islands said, \$182 million of police financing is going to go to the local municipalities.

You can talk big about it but you don't do anything. You talk big and then you force somebody else to pay for the big talk, and they also have to meet a lot of other obligations. Front-line police officers in our area and in other areas of the province are going to be saying, "Are our resources going to be cut as a result of this?" and I say to them, there's a good chance of that happening, despite the fact that the government suggested something else.

The member for Kingston and The Islands appropriately pointed out all the areas of downloading, including social housing. He said it will be an almost \$900-million cost to local communities; property assessment now going at a cost of \$120 million.

The member for London Centre mentioned the need for adequate consultation before coming forward with a so-called streamlined process in terms of a complaint system.

I appreciate all the remarks of the members. I say that this bill is simply another case of the provincial government dumping its responsibility and funding obligations to the local level.

**The Acting Speaker:** Further debate?

**Mr Kormos:** I would have responded, but since I had the chance to speak to it I'll simply echo what the member for St Catharines said about the distinctiveness

between Bill 105 and Bill 84. For the life of me, I can't understand why anybody would propose that the two be subjected to the hearing process simultaneously, or side by side, even.

They're two totally different issues. They're very much part of the same picture, but heck, if that were the test, you could put the last 20 pieces of legislation together in the same committee, in that they're all part of the same picture. These are two very different things, and I can tell you right now, in no uncertain terms, that our caucus is insisting on separate hearings for Bill 84.

You know Bill 84, Speaker; I know you do. That's the one that attacks firefighting services across Ontario, that devalues the role of professional firefighters, that subjects them to greater risk to their own personal safety and indeed creates yet-less-safe communities by virtue of its attack on professional firefighting.

That is a bill that's going to require, and we're going to insist on, hearings across Ontario, including down in Niagara region where, I tell you, firefighters are, dare I say it, "hot" over the issue. They've analysed the bill. Firefighters in Niagara, along with their sisters and brothers across Ontario, have looked at Bill 84 and know exactly what the intent of Bill 84 is.

**Mr Bradley:** There was a huge crowd out front. Remember that?

**Mr Kormos:** Well, this government ain't seen nothing yet. The firefighters a couple of weeks ago put on a demonstration. Although I have something of an affinity and affection, Speaker, for what you've come to understand is the standard sort of demonstration here in Ontario, and I've been to a couple of them myself, they were as creative, I tell you — just for a minute, because this is in the context of Bill 105 — as the demonstrations that occurred last year in, I believe, May and October.

I was over at — I guess I had to get the lay of the land — the old city hall provincial court, up in courtroom M, on Tuesday of this week, and the judge bet me, the provincial court judge — the courtroom scene was incredible. This was a trial for mischief, the criminal offence of mischief. You'll recall that the member for Sault Ste Marie and I raised the follow-up of that, when two of those same persons were arrested after coming to Queen's Park to pray a few weeks ago. They were praying, each to their own God. It was a multifaith organization. Two of them came here to pray, and they had earlier been released on this mischief charge, this Criminal Code offence of mischief. You can go to jail for that. People do go to jail for that. People go to jail for committing mischief.

What happened is, they had been here last year — and these are people who are part of a congregation and supporters and friends who have developed an acute concern for the homeless and poor kids, children living in poverty, like the one out of three kids here in the city of Toronto supported by social assistance.

But what happened — you see, we can't isolate Bill 105; it's part and parcel of a larger picture. What happened is that a group of these people, including a clergy person, just a broad cross-section of folks, came here to illustrate their concern and to draw attention to their concern about the growing poverty and hunger of chil-



dren, among others, that was of course concurrent with this government's attack on the poorest when it reduced support for the poor, unemployed to the tune of 21.6%.

It was funny, because not too long after the government got elected and reduced social assistance support for the poor, they then jacked up the paycheque of every MPP in the Legislature by virtue of a pay raise. Somehow I could —

**Mr Bradley:** It was a pay cut, wasn't it?

**Mr Kormos:** Well, Mr Bradley from St Catharines, you were told it was a pay cut, but when you do the numbers it ends up being a pay increase. Interesting, but a pay increase for each and every member of the Legislative Assembly was imposed in virtual juxtaposition with a reduction in benefits for poor people, for people who aren't being given the opportunity to work, as they very much want.

These folks came to Queen's Park concerned about the increasing amount of hunger and homelessness and poverty in Ontario. They very much made the direct political link with this government and its policies, and they were going to demonstrate. They came here to demonstrate and they brought — they were very careful — some sacks of earth from a nursery. This is the high-quality potting soil that costs a fair amount of money. They spread a small layer of it on some grassed earth, very careful to keep it away from any area where they might obstruct people walking in and out of the Legislature, and they put seeds in the ground and they put in little plants and tried to pack this very high-quality earth, to compact it around the roots of those little plants. They were going to grow food, they were going to try to grow food so that people could eat. They got busted.

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It wasn't you, Speaker, it was the previous Speaker who supervised the intervention of the Ontario Provincial Police. The OPP came and they busted them. They didn't summons them, an experience I thought would have been more suitable and one I'm personally familiar with. They busted them. They hauled them off to the slammer. They held them in custody. They subjected them to a bail hearing.

**Mr Wildman:** For planting seeds?

**Mrs Boyd:** Yes, for planting a victory garden.

**Mr Kormos:** For putting some little seeds in the ground. These people were trying to make a point about the hunger and the poverty and the homelessness. They threw them in jail. I'm told, if I'm correct, they spent overnight in the slammer.

**Mrs Boyd:** No bail.

**Mr Kormos:** No bail. They appeared before a justice of the peace who imposed upon them the condition that they not attend at or near within some 500 metres of Queen's Park.

Do you remember — you're about my age; I suspect you would, Speaker — back in the 1960s there was a little tune that acquired great — I remember it was two Parliaments ago that I made reference to being on the Group W bench and the only member who picked it up was Greg Sorbara. That was, I guess, those months in that commune in central northern BC where he was probably — who knows what he was cultivating up there

in north central BC back in the 1960s, but he knew what I was talking about. I very much identified with those guys on the Group W bench at that particular point in my political career.

So here we are just like that scene out of Alice's Restaurant, with the 8 by 10 glossy photos and the circles and arrows on each one, there I am in the courtroom Tuesday morning and there's the judge with his red sash and his long black flowing robes, and there's a court reporter and there's a court clerk and there's bibles and there's flags and there's the seal of office, the coat of arms, and there's police officers, big burly ones with guns pushing out the front of their jackets and there's court security staff, and the trial commenced.

It was a charge of mischief and the evidence was that they put seeds in the ground, and they got busted, hauled off, thrown into the hoosegow, brought before a justice of the peace, subjected to a bail hearing.

This is part and parcel of what we're talking about here. It was Ontario's police that hauled them off. No criticism of the police because it appears there had been something of a nod, and perhaps a nod and a wink, from the Speaker of the day who wasn't going to have any of that nonsense going on down here at Queen's Park where people are putting seeds in the ground — we will not have anything growing that's nutritious in the dirt around Queen's Park, not this Queen's Park, not this new, Conservative Queen's Park.

**Mrs Boyd:** Even though it's highly fertilized.

**Mr Kormos:** These planters were very careful. They weren't going to rely upon the fertilizer that's manufactured here in the chamber; they brought their own. It was high-quality, nutritious fertilizer.

I sat there all morning and watched what must have been tens — if not more — of thousands of taxpayers' money — because there was a crown attorney, a BA, LLB, Lord knows what else — prosecuting these people, cross-examining and making submissions to the judge. The judge was a modern judge; he had a tabletop PC up there, making notes.

Needless to say — and I know you've followed the case, Speaker, because down where you're from, very similar to where I'm from, agriculture is an honourable and significant activity. I'm convinced that if Christ hadn't been a carpenter, His second choice would have been a farmer because one is as honourable as the other.

The judge found all three of the people on trial not guilty. The judge said that not only was there no evidence that there was damage to anything around Queen's Park, but in fact there was some evidence from which he could conclude that they had improved or enhanced the value of the lands around Queen's Park by virtue of adding to the grassed area, this very nutritious, high-quality, carefully gathered soil that they had bought from a nursery and very specifically so.

**Mr Wildman:** And they didn't charge them.

**Mr Kormos:** And there was no charge to the folks at Queen's Park.

**Mr Froese:** It cost a lot of money to clean it up, 80 bucks.

**Mr Kormos:** Mr Froese, who is from Niagara-on-the-Lake, St Catharines-Brock, talked about a lot of money.



You see, once again, he does what Tories are inclined to do. He said 80 bucks. The evidence was \$40, but he did a multiple of two this time.

**Mr Froese:** I read it in the newspaper.

**Mr Kormos:** He did it again. He said he read it in the paper. The paper said \$40. For a former manager of a credit union, I've got to tell you, I'm surprised.

**Mr Wildman:** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Is there a quorum present?

**The Acting Speaker:** Would you like me to check and see? Would the table check for a quorum.

**Senior Clerk Assistant and Clerk of Journals (Mr Alex D. McFedries):** A quorum is not present, Speaker.

*The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.*

**Senior Clerk Assistant and Clerk of Journals:** A quorum is now present, Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** The Chair recognizes the member for Welland-Thorold.

**Mr Kormos:** Thank you, Speaker. You will recall that I was relating to you what had happened most recently on Tuesday, February 11 of this week, over at the old city hall provincial courtroom M, when the Queen's Park planters were found not guilty of mischief. I'm grateful to Judge Bentley for his skilful analysis of the law and his consideration of the facts. I suppose I'm apologetic to the police who were drawn into using and felt compelled to use their discretion to arrest these people, and grateful to their lawyer — you should know that their lawyer was John Norris, a law firm over on 11 Prince Arthur Avenue, who did an excellent job of assisting the court in interpreting the law.

I know it got a lot of attention. The press covered it reasonably well. It got a lot of attention down in Welland-Thorold, throughout Niagara. I was down there last night. What happened was that the member for Rainy River came down with me. We went and visited some of the picketers over at Stelpipe, Page-Hersey, over in the south end of Welland. We went over to the union hall; it used to be the UE hall on Steel Street, and now it's the CAW hall because of the merger. Stelpipe workers have been on strike down in Welland since November 1 of last year. They were forced out on to the sidewalks because Stelco-Stelpipe simply refuses to bargain in anything akin to good faith. Stelpipe workers, some 380-plus of them, have been forced to strike, seeking some parity with the wages of workers in other Stelco subsidiaries and some parity with the pension benefits enjoyed by workers in other Stelco subsidiaries.

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Two negotiating meetings had been conducted, one for a mere 10 minutes — that was called by the union, terminated by the company after a mere 10 minutes — a second one for a mere 45; the third one, another 10-minute meeting, was held just recently at the request of the company, the request of management, lo and behold, to what end? For what purpose? So that the company could announce that it was pulling everything off the table, that it didn't intend to bargain in good faith.

The leader of my party and I went down there yesterday, spoke with those strikers, tried to buoy their spirits by telling them how proud we were of them, that these were workers who have got strong leadership — Mitch

Labrie is their shop chair and he's been doing a sound and solid job of leading these workers, with their united support. These are people who are very much afraid of the downloading and of the new taxes, along with user fees, that are going to be faced by them and every other property owner in Niagara region. Heck, down in Niagara region, when this government first announced its downloading process, the rough calculations were a shortfall, new taxes for residents, for property owners of Niagara region, to the tune of \$31 million. Since then, that's grown to \$73 million in new taxes to be imposed on property owners as a result of this government's downloading. Bill 105 is very much part and parcel of that downloading.

This government is downloading and forcing property taxes up to people who can ill afford it. That's why I talk about the workers on the picket lines down at Stelpipe, people like my neighbour Rob Whiteman, who's a long-time Stelpipe worker, who doesn't want to be on strike, wants to be back in the factory producing pipe but is confronted by a company that I fear, and I believe too, has what it perceives very much as licence, basically carte blanche from this government, to do what it wants to with workers and collective bargaining units and collective bargaining agreements, quite frankly.

Here's a company that is now — same old talk. Nothing's really changed. Here's a company that started to talk a big game but it's trying to use the bully tactics; it's trying to engender fear in the community: "Oh, we'll shut the plant down. Maybe we'll have to sell it. Maybe we'll have to restructure it or re-engineer." The same old stuff, the same lines they've been pulling for decade after decade.

I was happy to see that the workers aren't buying it, that the workers at Stelpipe remain strong, remain united. They've got the support of their community. Let me tell you, the wall of the union hall over there on Steel Street, Local 523, is covered with posters, small placards indicating the names of all the small business people who have been supporting that strike and those strikers, those workers who are forced out on to the picket line, the small businesses where I come from, who understand how important it is that workers receive decent wages.

These small businesses understand that when you create a low-wage economy, when you attack work standards, health and safety standards, when you attack wages the way this government has attacked wages, when you attack work the way this government attacks work — because the fact is that unemployment is higher now in Ontario than it was a year ago, and dramatically so among young people, young people who very much want to have the right and want to participate in the workforce and in the economy in a meaningful way. So small businesses down in Welland understand that a tax on workers and workers' wages also constitutes an attack on small business.

I recall Ms Catherine Swift from the Canadian Federation of Independent Business. When she talks about small business, she means some operation with 100 or so non-union employees working for minimum wage. That's her view of what constitutes small business. Catherine Swift would suggest, and has, that low wages for workers



mean better conditions for small business people. She would suggest that deregulation of the workplace, that the elimination of minimum wages and health and safety standards and environmental standards, is good for small business.

Down where I come from, small business knows better. They wouldn't give Ms Swift the time of day. Because just like those hundreds of small businesses whose names are posted up now on little pieces of construction paper on the wall of the UE hall down on Steel Street, they know, and that's why they're backing these strikers. That's why they're standing with them; that's why they're contributing goods and services and indeed money to support the Stelpipe workers as they engage in this significant labour struggle. Small business down there knows that when working people win, small business wins too, that when working people win, as they must, with their struggle, fair wages, then small business is going to prosper.

But when Queen's Park downloads on to municipalities, when Queen's Park shifts the load in the commercial tax base from big business on to small business, which it does by the abolition of the business occupancy tax — you've heard it discussed before. You've heard some of my colleagues explain how the banks at the end of the day will end up paying less while the small businesses, the legitimate small businesses, are going to end up paying more.

The folks over at the Blue Star restaurant — small business, employs people, has sustained and supported families for three generations now — are going to end up paying more, while the bank down the road with huge profits is going to end up paying less by way of property taxes.

I'm suggesting that the people in Welland-Thorold aren't that much different from people in other parts of Ontario, and that people in other parts of Ontario understand as well that what this government is doing is a direct attack on communities and on the families who live in those communities and on the workers who want to work in those communities.

One of the things Bill 105 does, and there seems at first glance to be some attractiveness to it — the Solicitor General pointed out that one of the members of the Liberal caucus indeed congratulated him on including this in his bill, which deals with a number of facets of policing and police oversight. That was calling upon a whole number of municipalities — it seems like, what, 500-plus — who have historically been policed by the Ontario Provincial Police and who have the opportunity to continue to be policed by them but now on a fee-for-service basis. The suggestion was, well, every other city that isn't among these listed — they are 575 — every other city pays for its own policing, so why shouldn't these? I suppose there's some inherent logic or even fairness in it.

But we're talking about municipalities across Ontario. We're talking about — well, a town I know rather well is the town of Delhi. I know that city well. I've been there many times and spent a whole lot of time there. My grandparents used to be tobacco farmers out near Delhi, Tillsonburg, so I spent a whole lot of my childhood there.

But here's a small community in a struggling economy, especially now with the tobacco industry under great pressure — and I'm not about to suggest that it shouldn't be — that's had downloaded on to it millions and millions of dollars of new costs as a result of this government's abandonment of responsibility for things like social assistance and child care and care for seniors and public health, this government's abandonment of any responsibility for public transit, this government's abandonment of responsibility for public libraries.

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This government wants to shut down libraries. I'm sure there are communities for which the elimination of government support and supervision of public libraries won't constitute a problem. I'm sure there are small areas of the province that are enclaves of more upscale, perhaps wealthier residents, for whom the cost of maintaining a public library won't be a burden. Maybe it's those same communities that have less occasion to access public libraries; I don't know. I know who uses libraries where I come from. I know who uses the public libraries. It's seniors, for whom the library is a source of leisure, a source of knowledge, a source of community, because they go there to meet other people, to meet other folks, other seniors, retirees. It's a means of having access to the world of reading, among other things, along with computers and videotapes and film and all other sorts of resources, with a shared cost, because it's funded publicly.

Again, where I come from, people understand what it means to share resources and people understand that when you get down to ways of collecting revenue, a progressive tax base is a far fairer way of collecting revenue than is a regressive tax base: to wit, sales taxes or property taxes or, even more so, even more regressive, user fees. This government promised, "No new user fees." The Premier promised, when he was doing his little Ponzi scheme with the voters of Ontario, "No new user fees." Lo and behold, user fees are sprouting like dandelions across Ontario. Not only are user fees flourishing, but libraries are going to be shutting.

I tell you, the public library in Welland and in Thorold and in Niagara Falls — we were there last night. The leader of my party and I were in the Niagara Falls Public Library. We stopped in and talked to some of the library staff, who were incredibly concerned about what this government is doing to community. These are library workers, and library work isn't traditionally very high-paying. These folks know that, but they work there because they have a passion for what libraries can do for and with and in conjunction with communities.

You've got a town like Delhi that's had the boots put to it by a government that has not created one of the 725,000 new jobs that it promised. It's had the boots put to it, the town of Delhi, by a government that has generated dramatically higher levels of unemployment and joblessness among youth and young people than exist even among their parents. You've got a town like Delhi that's being told there isn't going to be any provincial support for its public libraries so that seniors and, yes, young people — because not only do retirees and seniors use libraries, but young people do as well. They use



libraries, once again, because their public libraries are remarkable sources of resources for learning and for pleasure and for leisure, and they're also part of what makes a community a community. You need these kinds of things in these kinds of places if you're going to have a sense of community.

But now the town of Delhi is being told that it's going to have to pick up, just like that, a tab for policing, yet another cost for taxpayers in Delhi. I tell you, Delhi is very much a seniors' community as well. It's a community of a large number of retirees, of people from all over Ontario, a whole lot of them from the Delhi area or Tillsonburg or Cayuga, all those places around there, who retire there. They have folks from all over Ontario who went to small-town Ontario to retire and who calculated in their budgets, yes, among other things, what are the taxes on this modest retirement home?

You've got the resort area near there — you know that — of Turkey Point. Turkey Point: One's imagination begins to explode with visions of Tory backbenchers vacationing at Turkey Point. What an appropriate location.

You've got a town like Delhi that's going to be whacked. It's going to be whacked in the same way — Mr Marchese, my friend from Fort York, talked about how this government is whacking people with fairness. It's making partnerships out of municipalities. Partnerships, my foot. Municipalities are being held hostage. They're being held hostage.

**Mr Peter L. Preston (Brant-Haldimand):** What have you got against Turkey Point?

**Mr Kormos:** The member for Prescott just came to. I mean Brant-Haldimand; Peter Preston. Why did I say "Prescott," Speaker? You're from Prescott. The member for Brant-Haldimand isn't the member from Prescott. I apologize to you, Speaker, very much. The member for Brant-Haldimand just came to and has started to cackle. I suppose the reference to turkeys got him going, because that definitely was a cackle. But there you are.

A town like Delhi's going to get whacked. Who else is on the list? Huntsville: Huntsville's interesting. The ratepayers of Huntsville are going to be called upon to foot the bill for policing, just like that — no transition, no process. Think about Huntsville for a minute. Think about the policing demands on that community. The fact is that Huntsville's population rises and drops depending upon the season of the year; that the policing demands in Huntsville are far different from what they are for most other communities of a similar size, as they are in Muskoka Lakes, as they are in — well, let's take a look. I'm sure some of these other communities — to a certain extent in Barrie, though certainly not as dramatically so as Muskoka Lakes or Huntsville.

Collingwood: Collingwood is going to take the whack, is going to be whacked with fairness, as the member for Fort York says, by this government. The property taxpayers are going to see dramatic property tax increases as a result of this proposition in Bill 105. There's no two ways about it.

Goderich, again a relatively unique community that has some unique policing demands. Wyoming: I've been out to Wyoming out in western Ontario, interesting small-

town Ontario. Those people are going to be whacked. There are 575 communities with populations of 712 and 386, like Ailsa Craig, wonderful small-town Ontario. Ailsa Craig, with a population of 947, is going to get whacked with increased property taxes above and beyond the increased property taxes that are going to flow from the downloading, because this government all of a sudden is going to hit on these people for the policing that the OPP have been providing.

Here we go: We look at Wallace, Havelock, Millbrook. All of these are unique communities, 575 of them. Wasaga Beach, again so similar to Collingwood or Huntsville or Muskoka Lakes in terms of a unique community; Wasaga Beach, a community that attracts large tourist populations, that has unique policing demands, far different from any other communities.

Here we are: I think we have a minister who's responsible for tourism. I know that Mr Saunderson bears that title. I even see him from time to time sitting in his seat. I believe I've heard him speak from time to time. I'm not confident that I've ever heard him address anything akin to meaningful comments about tourism, but I'm sure he's been here. I suppose if there were any sort of records kept — we could review videotape. I'll talk about videotape in short order. We could review videotape and confirm that, yes, there is a minister responsible for tourism who, yes, has been in this House.

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I wonder what he's got to say to these communities like Collingwood, Wasaga Beach, Huntsville, Muskoka that have some very unique policing demands, that are very much a part of the tourist structure of Ontario and whose property owners are going to be whacked with fairness by this government that wants to take municipalities hostage. This government is taking municipalities hostage in its bid to provide a tax break for the very wealthiest here in Ontario.

Get into northern Ontario: Blind River, Thessalon — **Interjection:** Blind River? That's in my riding.

**Mr Kormos:** Blind River, on the list; Bruce Mines, on the list; communities that are going to be whacked as this government downloads the cost of all the things that were announced by the Minister of Municipal Affairs et al and now are contained in Bill 105 as the tab for OPP policing is passed on to them without so much as a warning or a how-de-do.

White River, Timmins, Cochrane, Hearst, Iroquois Falls, Smooth Rock Falls are looking to bigger and bigger tax bills for property owners because this government has abandoned communities and is looking to those communities to pay for the tax break for the very wealthiest of Ontarians, oh so few of whom are inclined, I suspect, to live — well, the Minister of Municipal Affairs would be far more intimate with them than I would. We're talking about the Rosedale types, I suppose, not so much the kind of hardworking people who live in Hearst, Cochrane, Timmins, Iroquois Falls or Smooth Rock Falls.

The list goes on: Mattawa, Temagami, Rainy River; Rainy River, population 921 people, 321 households, being whacked with yet higher and higher property taxes because this government is going to download on to them the cost of Ontario Provincial Police policing.



The argument is that this is fairness. You tell me, Speaker, what's fair about a senior just barely making it in Mike Harris's Ontario who is whacked with yet higher property taxes and is forced out of his or her or their home because of property taxes generated by this government, property taxes that become unbearable and well beyond their budget?

What about young families — where the unemployment nurtured by this government, the unemployment fostered by this government, the unemployment, I tell you, encouraged by this government that penetrates those families, those households of young families — when they're whacked with these kinds of new taxes, these new property taxes that are blind, oblivious to one's income or one's ability to pay? These are called regressive taxes. You're talking about young families being forced out of their homes, young families being denied all the equity they may have accumulated in their homes over the course of making a down payment and trying to pay down a mortgage over the period of the last few years.

There are 575 communities across Ontario, from the north down to the south, that are going to be whacked by having imposed on their property taxpayers the costing of Ontario Provincial Police. I don't think that's fairness. I don't think that's any fairer than calling upon the poor and the sick and workers and the elderly to fund a tax break for the very wealthiest. Rich people might think that's fair, I'm sure Conrad Black thinks that's fair — Tubby, as he's known — I'm sure Barbara Amiel thinks that's fair — Tubby's spouse, as she's known, the spouse of Tubby — but I tell you, the seniors in Collingwood, the seniors in Blind River, the young families in Chapleau know it's not fair that they should have new property taxes imposed on them, that they should have imposed on them the cost of Ontario provincial policing so that Tubby and Babs can revel in a tax break. That's not what people voted for when they voted Tory. I suppose that's what they're getting and they'd better awaken, and they are awakening to that.

Fairness? Far from it. Bill 105 is part and parcel of the agenda that has very much as its cornerstone Bill 26. Remember Bill 26? People across Ontario remember it vividly. They remember a Minister of Municipal Affairs who stumbled and muttered, carried on, flubbed questions, flubbed answers and just didn't get it. You recall what the opposition had to do to get hearings on Bill 26, because this government had no concern. First of all, most of this government, even the minister, had no knowledge whatsoever of what was contained in Bill 26 — none whatsoever. He couldn't answer a question about the subject matter and the impact and effect of Bill 26 if his life depended on it.

On public hearings, the government had no interest whatsoever in facing the rage, the anger and the fear Bill 26 generated across Ontario, including communities throughout regional Niagara. Then when the government members — they were necktied and silk-suited and sitting there — were confronted, presentation after presentation, by angry Ontarians who revealed, who exposed and who opposed the intent of Bill 26, some of the government members were surprised there would be such anger at an effort to de-democratize Ontario.

It was a let-them-eat-cake kind of response: "These people should be grateful. These taxpayers, these workers, these unemployed people, these seniors, these retirees should be grateful that Mike Harris and the Tories are going to assume control of the future of their communities, their health care system and their educational system."

I'll tell you what's happening down in Niagara. Boy, a couple of weeks ago on a Thursday evening I was at what I believe is the last of the public hearings by a panel representing the Niagara District Health Council restructuring steering committee. You know what that's all about. It's about this government's agenda to shut down hospitals, to privatize health care, to Americanize it and to create a system whereby the wealthiest have access to it, because they'll have access to privatized health care, while the poorest — there'll be many more of those — are forced to wait in lineups, lie on gurneys in hallways and wait for essential surgery, as is increasingly the case.

This government has every intention of shutting down the Port Colborne hospital — shut it down, close it. This government's oblivious to the fact that it doesn't belong to them, that the Port Colborne hospital was built brick by brick by people in Port Colborne, by workers who checked off the box to have \$2, \$5 or \$10 a week taken from their paycheques at Inco or any number of other places, or over at the Robin Hood.

It was at a time when a \$2 checkoff, never mind a \$5 or a \$10 checkoff, was a whole lot of money. Talk to those folks. They remember that. They remember paying for that hospital, dollar by dollar. They paid for it with their donations, their charitable contributions. Yes, families paid for it with bequests in wills. They helped build it, sustain it and maintain it with their volunteer labour. They were prepared: They understood that their tax dollars helped finance hospital and health care in their community and they were pleased to make that contribution, folks in Port Colborne, just like the folks in St Catharines and Thorold who built the Hotel Dieu.

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It's going to be shut down by this government. This government couldn't give a tinker's dam about universal public quality health care in Ontario. Hotel Dieu is a target for this government, Hotel Dieu with some highly specialized care including a major dialysis unit, Hotel Dieu which provides, in contrast but as a complement to the St Catharines General, health care in a spiritual Catholic environment is a target of this government's abandonment of public universal health care.

You've heard over the course of the last couple of days about the encouragement of privatization, of private ambulance services, but more so of ownership and operation by American ambulance companies. You listened to the Minister of Health today mumble some feeble defence of his agreement to permit American ambulance for-profit operators to buy up small-town ambulance services here in Ontario by suggesting that somehow some level of quality is going to be maintained. Take a look. Tell me which major American city's public health care you're overly impressed with. Do you want to pick Chicago, or down at St Vincent's in Manhattan, or do you want to pick any city in the south?



I know there are private clinics. There are very posh private hospitals where the very wealthy who can afford it can have treatment performed. That's exactly the design and the agenda of this government for health care in Ontario. It knows that after it shuts down Port Colborne, that after it shuts down Hotel Dieu and Niagara-on-the-Lake's hospital, that after it shuts the doors there are going to be big holes in health care delivery in the Niagara region.

It also knows that there are American health care operators lined up at the Peace Bridge ready to fill those gaps, ready to fill those holes, to do it on a for-profit basis and to do it in a manner that's going to set us back decades and generations, and that's going to attack the public health care system that so many Ontarians and Canadians worked for, paid for, made sacrifices for, and to which they are incredibly committed.

Just as I make that observation, I also observe that the meeting I was at over at the CAW hall, Local 199, at Bunting Road in St Catharines was filled to overflowing by people from Niagara region who were saying, "Hell, no, to Mike Harris and his gang of thieves." That's what it is, it's theft. For this government to confiscate public assets, as it does when it shuts down hospitals, for this government to engage in that sort of confiscation of public assets, the assets of the people of Port Colborne and Thorold and St Catharines, when it seizes them to shut them down so that it can make room for its profit-driven corporate friends from the United States — do you think the American entry is in any way anathema to this government? Think again, please.

Just take a look at the Ministry of Transportation: the minister's defence of an American contractor to paint those lines on the expanded QEW down in Niagara region. The issue was raised with the Minister of Transportation. He was happy as a pig in a barnyard that an American company would be contracted with, paid Ontario taxpayers' money to come over here and do work that unemployed Ontarians would dearly love to be doing.

The issue was raised again when the minister, rightly or wrongly, embarked on his little Burma Shave passion and is going to sell roadside advertising. Well, lo and behold, who does this government award the contract to, to prepare those signs, to create the artwork and the signs themselves? Another American company, doing work that Ontarians dearly want to do.

So don't tell me this government doesn't have a design about creating unemployment. These were two obvious examples wherein this government could have provided jobs for hardworking, skilled Ontario workers. It abandoned those workers, left them wallowing in poverty and the unemployment that causes it and preferred to give the work to American contractors.

This government is gung ho, its arms are wide open, ready to embrace that lineup of American profiteers and entrepreneurs lined up at the Peace Bridge who are coming over here ready to reap the spoils of the ravaging of public institutions by the gang of Tories who hold power for the moment here in Ontario at Queen's Park.

We know that Bill 84, part of the overall picture, one of the pieces of the puzzle, is going to accommodate and

indeed encourage private firefighting services. I tell you that Bill 105, the bill we're discussing right now — you knew that, Speaker — is going to have the capacity to do much the same for policing.

Let's take a look at what Bill 105 dramatically does when it comes to the historical independence of policing. In this province and in this country we've always regarded police to be independent — at least we hoped they were independent of the politics of the day. Mind you, some recent events here at Queen's Park cause one to doubt whether the police have been permitted to remain independent.

I told you I heard the evidence at the provincial court on February 11 over in courtroom M at old city hall, where the Queen's Park planters were found not guilty of the charge of mischief and where the evidence as presented was to the effect that the police acted, effecting the arrest and taking these people into custody, after getting, I suppose I could describe it briefly as a wink and a nod from the then Speaker — no longer Speaker; then Speaker. It seems to me that a wink and a nod can be as meaningful a politicization of the police as can an overt command or instruction.

More recently, you'll recall — do you realize that a couple of members of this Legislative Assembly had the gall, the audacity, the boldness to get in a car in the wee early morning of November 7 — because what had happened was that the Attorney General of the province, as he would like to call himself or has he purports to be, responsible for the family support plan, had day after day been telling this Legislature and the people of Ontario and the victims of the mismanaged and bungled family support plan that the failure of the FSP to deliver moneys rightly owned by thousands of women and their children, their little kids, was but glitches in a system that otherwise was up and running. He created a mega-FSP. You'll remember that. His mega-FSP worked about as well as the megacity is going to work here in Toronto, because Charlie Harnick —

**The Acting Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley):** Could you refer to the members by their riding, please.

**Mr Kormos:** Good, because I'd rather refer to him by his riding than as Attorney General. Reference to his riding is probably far more accurate than reference to him as Attorney General.

**The Acting Speaker:** "Attorney General" will do as well.

**Mr Kormos:** Will "Attorney General" do?

**The Acting Speaker:** It will do as well under the rules.

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**Mr Kormos:** The member for Willowdale, who was the Attorney General, shut down eight of nine regional offices for the family support plan, shut them down — bang — just like this government wants to shut down the hospitals down in the Niagara region; Port Colborne General — "Shut 'er down." Hotel Dieu — "Shut 'er down." It doesn't matter that Niagara has an aging population that's increasingly in need of health care. It doesn't matter that these hospitals provide emergency services. It doesn't matter that Hotel Dieu has some highly specialized services that are virtually irreplaceable,



like the dialysis unit, and it would cost millions of dollars to replicate, I suppose, to create again. "Shut 'er down."

This government took eight of nine regional offices and it shut 'em down and it took 290, give or take a couple, hardworking, skilled, trained, talented staff and shut them down, created 290 newly unemployed people here in Ontario, people who previously had been working hard in a program that was designed to ensure that moms and their kids got the support payments that were being paid by their usually former spouses through the workplace.

Our constituency offices were being besieged by calls of complaint. Workers, the husbands, the fathers, were getting the moneys deducted from their cheques. The moneys were being sent to the family support plan, to the Attorney General, but weren't getting delivered to the rightful recipients. Questions were raised by members of the opposition: by the member for Sudbury East, the member for Beaches-Woodbine, the member for London Centre, the member for Riverdale, each and every one of us. This became the number one, largest complaint being received by our offices.

We asked the Attorney General day after day what the problem was, and he insisted day after day, week after week, literally month after month that the system was up and running, that he had created a mega-FSP office up in Downsview and that it was a far cry better than what had been delivered by the eight regional offices he shut down, that the staff working up there at that FSP office in Downsview were providing far better service than the 290 trained, skilled, competent, hardworking staff he terminated when he shut down those eight regional offices.

Two MPPs from the opposition, after hearing this day after day and week after week, figured that something was out of sync, and who would want to think that the Attorney General had lied? Certainly nobody wanted to indicate that he lied because that would be unparliamentary. Why is it unparliamentary to call somebody a liar but it isn't unparliamentary to lie, Speaker? Why, on the occasions when members have stood up and called the Attorney General a liar, have they been asked to withdraw, but when the Attorney General lied day after day he wasn't asked to withdraw?

There's something very ironic about that. There's something that, again, is out of sync. It's okay to be a liar here but it's not okay for somebody else to call you one. I figure the far greater offence is to be a liar rather than to identify them as they pop up in the front or second rows from time to time.

Two members of the opposition took a morning drive along with a cameraperson to Downsview, eager to observe and indeed photograph this mega-FSP office of the Attorney General's, eager to film the workstations occupied or ready to roll and the files being processed, because that's what the Attorney General had been saying day after day after day. What did two opposition MPPs find and what did they record on videotape?

**Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre):** Tell us.

**Mr Kormos:** Three floors of chaos: confidential files of the family support plan from across Ontario sitting in unsealed cardboard packing boxes in public, readily accessible hallways, not even given the dignity of being

put behind doors. Now we knew what some of the problem was, why the files were sitting, gathering dust in a public hallway in unsealed cardboard boxes.

This is high-tech, this is corrugated cardboard, the high-tech of this Attorney General. There it was. My goodness, we started to open unlocked doors to find files strewn about the floor, their contents readily visible to anybody who would want to look: Computers piled, and this was all videotaped, one on top of the other, their cords dangling like, well, unused, gathering dust, in a mess. Chaos.

The third floor we visited — this was supposed to be the guts of the operation; this was supposed to be where it was all happening: dead space, nothing, zero, zip. Then we knew what had happened to all those women and their children, literally thousands of them who weren't getting moneys that were rightly theirs. They were among the cardboard boxes piled helter-skelter in the hallway. They were the victims of workstations that weren't being worked at. They were the victims of an Attorney General who shut down the family support plan, who shut it down with no concern whatsoever about the plight his abuse and his lack of interest in the family support plan would create for thousands of women and their kids.

Let's make this perfectly clear: The moneys that are owed these women aren't taxpayers' dollars. They're support moneys that are being paid by ex-spouses and fathers of children being deducted through the workplace, moneys that are being paid to the Attorney General that are being pocketed by the Attorney General but not being paid out. I know what they call that where I come from. It seems that the standards are a little bit different with this government than they are with most of Ontario.

So what's the response, Speaker?

**Mr Preston:** Mr Speaker, on a point of order: I believe the member of third party has just said that the Attorney General is pocketing money that is going to his department.

**Mr Trevor Pettit (Hamilton Mountain):** No.

**Mr Preston:** That's what he said, that the Attorney General is pocketing the money, and I don't believe that is in order.

**Mr Wildman:** On a point of order: My friend from Welland-Thorold could never have suggested that the Attorney General would be pocketing the money he has failed to pay out for the family support plan. His pockets are not nearly —

**The Acting Speaker:** Okay, member for Algoma, could you take your seat please?

**Mr Wildman:** The fact is, he was referring to the government pocketing the money.

**Mr Preston:** He explicitly said the Attorney General was pocketing the money.

**Mr Derwyn Shea (High Park-Swansea):** The member for Algoma knows how deep the pockets must be.

**The Acting Speaker:** Could I have order please? It's a little hard to think with all the noise, especially — I forgot my colleague's riding here. I didn't hear, I must admit. Somebody just came to speak to me.

1730

*Interjection.*

**The Acting Speaker:** That's right, briefly, which happens from time to time. I did not hear exactly what



was said. If the member for Welland-Thorold is aware that he's said something that is unparliamentary, I give him the opportunity now to withdraw it and that will be the end of it.

**Mr Kormos:** Thank you, Speaker.

Here we've got millions of dollars —

**The Acting Speaker:** I would also at this time like to remind the member for Welland-Thorold — I've been listening carefully to try to find the connection between Bill 105, which we're debating, and your subject matter. I'm sure you're going to come back to 105 any minute now.

**Mr Kormos:** Thank you, Speaker.

So here we are, because what we're talking about is the politicization of the police. I talk to you, Speaker, about the wink and the nod by the then Speaker to the OPP when they busted people who were putting seeds into the ground outside Queen's Park. They busted them, threw them in jail. They hauled them off. I call that an effort to politicize the police.

Now, what's the response of the government after two opposition MPPs come back with videotape illustrating that the Attorney General —

**The Acting Speaker:** Member for Welland-Thorold, sorry, but I'm going to have to ask you again. I am trying to find the connection between Bill 105 and your speech at the moment and I can't find it. Could you please come back to the bill we're debating today. Thank you.

**Mr Kormos:** Thank you, Speaker.

We're going to reach the point where this bill will permit municipalities to determine the budgets, indeed compel municipalities to determine the budgets of police services boards, which will have as its effect the politicization of police. To take you to that point, Speaker —

*Applause.*

**Mr Kormos:** Thank you kindly.

To take you to that point, Speaker, look at the politicization of the police, because here we've got an Attorney General — the fact remains that there are thousands, millions of dollars being paid into the Attorney General by workers who were fulfilling their support obligations. Their children didn't get the money; their former spouses didn't get the money. Somebody had the money. It wasn't in the paycheques of the husbands whose paycheques were being deducted. It wasn't with the employers, because in virtually each and every case the employer confirms that the employer sent it to the Attorney General.

**Mrs Marland:** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: As the previous Speaker pointed out, there is a requirement in the standing orders that when we are in debate, we debate the bill before us. Bill 105 does not deal with the subject area which the member for Welland-Thorold is speaking to at this time.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr John R. O'Toole):** Yes. I would encourage the member to stick to the topic for debate.

**Mr Kormos:** Thank you, Speaker.

What's the response? The response is to politicize the police. It's exactly what Bill 105 does. I know the member for Mississauga South has read the bill and I know she regrets having risen on her point of order — and I appreciate your apologies, ma'am. I know she

regrets having risen on a point of order, because here we are: We've got a dramatic departure from the historical independence of police from political supervision. That's why we have a police services board which historically has had a majority of provincially appointed members. That's why the creation of a police budget has been the function of the police services board.

I appreciate that there has been, of course, interplay between a police services board and the municipality because they have to then look to the municipality to generate the moneys for that police budget from tax revenues. I appreciate as well that oftentimes there are protracted negotiations.

I know that down in regional Niagara the cops have been cut to the bone. They've cut and cut and cut. Let's put this in the Niagara context again for a minute.

I mentioned more than a few communities, places like Collingwood, Muskoka, Huntsville, that have unique policing demands and that this government and this province is going to whack with fairness by compelling them to pick up the tab for Ontario provincial policing.

You know what I'm talking about. We're talking about high tourist areas where there's an exceptional load or demand on policing far beyond the capacity of the community to pay, and there is. These communities, along with a lot of others on this list of 575 mostly small towns in Ontario that are going to have the cost of Ontario provincial policing downloaded on them, are part of this province's long-held tourist base, tourist structure.

I talked to some Niagara Regional Police about this particular provision, the significant change in (1) who determines the budget — it will now be the municipality rather than the police services board — and (2) the structure of the board, which will no longer consist of a majority of provincial appointments. To be fair, I have some mixed feelings because through the government agencies committee I've seen the quality of appointments to police services boards by this government and I suppose, having made that observation, one might feel relief that there were fewer, not more provincial appointments to police services boards.

I've also seen the types of people — ah, but you know what's remarkable? Did you see in the newspaper the report of the successful litigation by Jerry Kovacs, among others, against this government when they sued the butt off this government in Divisional Court for prematurely terminating their appointments as vice-chairs of the Ontario Labour Relations Board? They won. This government fouled up, it screwed up. The court found that it had no right terminating, prematurely and without cause, Jerry Kovacs and others who have been appointed as vice-chairs of the Ontario Labour Relations Board.

You'll know that this government tried to dump, among others, Marion Dewar from the Ottawa area police services board. One of the observations we've had a chance to make on that committee is that they seem to have something against women on police services boards.

*Interjections.*

**Mr Kormos:** Well, Marion Dewar, the failure to reappoint Melva Snowling in Niagara region, the failure to reappoint Adele Tanguay. Let me talk about Melva —

**Mrs Helen Johns (Huron):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'm outraged by the comments of this member



for Welland-Thorold. As he well knows, we are very respectful of females in this caucus. I'd like an apology from him, please.

**The Acting Speaker:** I caution the member to stick to the topic at hand, and also with respect to imputing motives, I think that's not relevant to Bill 105.

**Mr Kormos:** Thank you, Speaker. So let's look at the history because we're talking here about —

**Mrs Johns:** I want an apology.

**Mr Kormos:** We're talking here about provincial appointments to police services boards and we're talking about a government —

**The Acting Speaker:** Take your seat. I encourage the member, if he feels what he said was in some way offensive, to withdraw the remark, or likewise, but to the member for Huron, the member has the floor. He's supposed to be sticking to Bill 105. You've made your point, and I'd ask you to continue.

**Mr Kormos:** Thank you, Speaker. I've had an opportunity to observe, as a member of the government agencies committee, this government's history when it comes to appointments to police services boards. We witnessed not just the failure to renew the appointments of women to police services boards — and again I'll speak very directly about Melva Snowling and Adele Tanguay, both of whom had been highly respected, highly regarded members of the Niagara Regional Police Services Board, both of whom had the support of their fellow board members, had the support of the regional chair, had the support of police officers, cops, just plain cops, yet who were denied reappointment, replaced by two male appointments.

1740

I regard the even more dramatic termination of Marion Dewar before her term of service had even expired. That's why I raised the Kovacs case and the fact that he whupped this government good — thank goodness for some justice in the courts — because they had terminated his appointment. Marion Dewar is involved, so far as I'm aware, in similar litigation.

You want to talk about this government's attitudes towards women? You've heard comment about the appointment of judges by this government and just who those happen to be. You've heard contrasted the record of the previous government and its attorneys general and their appointment of women to the bench with the record of this government and its Attorney General and the failure to give any recognition to the need for women to be as well represented on the bench as men, or, for that matter, for visible minorities, persons with disabilities etc. Indeed, the question was raised by my colleague that this government seems to be assuming there's no such thing as competent women, because this government insists that it appoints competent people. I say this government and its members and its backbenchers maybe should be a little more vociferous in caucus about the issue.

**Mr Tilson:** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: We've been listening to this member for well over an hour, almost an hour and a half, talk about everything but this bill. Different members of the House have asked the different speakers we've had today to make a ruling that this member simply stop going on his usual rants and try

to stick to the topic of the bill. I think, quite frankly, his time should be stopped.

**Mrs Boyd:** Draw some blood, David.

**Mr Tilson:** Well, you simply must stick to the topic. We have rules —

**The Acting Speaker:** Member, would you take your seat. Would the member take his seat, please.

The member for Dufferin-Peel has made the point that you're again veering off the subject of the debate, Bill 105. I would ask the member to pay heed in respect for the House and respect for the members who are listening to the debate and comment specifically on the bill. Thank you very much.

**Mr Kormos:** I understand that for some it's difficult to look at things in the overall picture. I understand that. We're talking very clearly here about appointments by the government versus appointments by the municipality, and in the context of that we've got to look at this government's record when it comes to appointments. Look, I was starting to side with the government when I was suggesting that maybe it is better that the government have fewer appointments to the police services board, because this government's record when it comes to appointments is so dismal and pathetic. I say that cognizant of the fact that these guys may be the government today, but they won't be the government after the next election. I have no hesitation in —

*Interjections.*

**Mr Kormos:** Oh, I hear them squealing and hollering — the fury that that's generated. But you know what? I said the same thing to Liberals in 1989 and the early part of 1990 and they squealed and carried on and laughed. And you know what? I think there were more than a few people who said it to New Democrats. I understand that.

The fact is that this government is embarking on the most dangerous, treacherous course of what it would prefer to call a revolution: Bill 105.

Remember I talked to you, Speaker, about we're looking at a total picture here? We're looking at pieces of the puzzle. Some are bigger than others, some are part of the frame and the border, some are part of the very central part. You can't hold one piece of a puzzle up and say, "Now I know what the picture is," can you, Speaker? I noticed you raised your eyebrows and remarked on that observation with body language; not speaking, because of course the Speaker doesn't speak, which is the same irony about how it's okay to lie here but it's not okay to call somebody a liar. I find that a real paradox, a real contradiction. If I call the Attorney General a liar, I'm out of order, but if the Attorney General lies, it's kosher, it's cool, it's smooth.

Here we've got Bill 105. Part of the puzzle is very much 105. What's the impact of permitting municipalities to acquire the majority of appointments, understanding that this government's record of appointments is pathetic but understanding as well that — you see, it's not because it's patronage. I understand patronage. Patronage is age-old and it's a part of the system. Other governments have engaged in patronage; this government joins patronage with incompetence. That's when it becomes really sad. I say that without hesitation: This government



not only indulges in patronage but joins patronage with incompetence. Patronage is fine if the people who are being appointed are competent, but you should have seen some of the dogs that were walked through the government agencies committee. You should see some of them. You could hear them barking all the way down the hall.

When I talk to cops about this, they express concern, because they've already witnessed the constant struggle and tension between police services boards, which determine budgets for their police services boards, and regional municipalities or municipalities — I guess just non-regional municipalities. What's going to happen here is that municipalities that have been whacked by fairness by this government, that have been taken into partnership, held hostage, if you will, by the provincial government — some partnership. I guess at some point the Stockholm syndrome comes into play and you start appreciating or enjoying the torment. I don't think the people of Ontario, least of all the people in Welland-Thorold or across Niagara, are going to succumb.

What we've got here is a police services board that becomes very politicized because it becomes dominated by municipal appointees, the same municipalities that now have the responsibility to set police budgets. So police and police services boards aren't going to have the independence and freedom to assess what's necessary, to give effect to appropriate policing in their community, indeed even to advocate for an appropriate budget. As municipalities become harder and harder hit and harder and harder financially pressed by this government, then municipalities are going to become less and less capable of responding to the real policing needs of their community.

1750

We made reference to this earlier. You conjoin this with the amendments to the Provincial Offences Act, which will put police in the role of revenue collectors because municipalities are going to acquire the responsibility to prosecute certain — again, the more modest or less serious, I suppose, provincial offences, things like seatbelts, speeding offences up to a certain limit, Liquor Licence Act offences, things of that ilk. The municipality is going to be charged with the responsibility to police and prosecute those but they will also be entitled to keep the revenues they obtain from them. What you're going to see is municipalities increasingly directing their police to attend to, well, yes, these less serious offences. I'm not suggesting seatbelts shouldn't be worn or that police shouldn't be enforcing seatbelt legislation. Police are going to be called upon to engage in policing activities that will have the effect of raising revenue for the municipality. I tell you, that's politicization of the police.

It's wrong for an Attorney General to give cops directions. It's wrong. Police have to be allowed to investigate and just lay informations, using a discretion that's acknowledged on their part, without being driven by political pressures, or, I say to you, by the sort of monetary pressures this government is imposing on municipalities.

The transfer of power to the municipality by virtue of reducing the number of provincial appointees or increasing the number of municipal ones — six of one, half a

dozen of the other — and by imposing upon municipal councils the responsibility for setting budgets is going to be disastrous. I'm telling you, it's going to put police officers at risk and it's going to put communities at risk as communities increasingly become underpoliced.

Just as this government has given licence, gone carte blanche for the corporate world, and just as it opened the door to organized crime with its introduction of slots, it's now giving a tip of the hat and a nod of the head to criminals, because Bill 105 is going to have the effect of defunding policing across Ontario. Accompanying that, of course, and we talked about this when it came to health care, are going to be the vacuum, the gaps, the holes that are left. It's going to be where prosperous neighbourhoods, American-style, are going to be hiring private police to police their neighbourhoods.

**Mr Bradley:** Mississippi North.

**Mr Shea:** Jim, how do you always manage to have American examples?

**Mr Kormos:** Well, quite frankly, we witnessed it in St Catharines just recently over the course of the last year and a half since this government was elected to power. No criticism of the Niagara Regional Police, but the level of defunding that had occurred already forced business owners along one commercial strip in St Catharines to hire private police. No ill will towards the Niagara Regional Police but they simply understood that the Niagara Regionals weren't adequately resourced to police those businesses, so they hired private police with guard dogs to patrol their neighbourhood.

The same vacuum, the same big gaps and holes are being created in health care where American-style HMO, private health care operators are lined up at the Peace Bridge ready to come and make profits off the sick.

This government, with Bill 105, is insulting and assaulting every police officer in the province of Ontario. This government talks a big game when it comes to law and order. The best it can come up with is ersatz boot camps and privatized jails run by Wackenhut or Pinkerton's or whatever the security firm of the day might be. This government, with Bill 105, is completing the puzzle, yet another piece of that broader picture — and there's so much more. Is my 90 minutes really up, Speaker? There's so much more.

I'm going to tell you, we're not voting for Bill 105. I'm telling you right now. The failure to consult on the issue of oversight — and that will be addressed further —

**Mr Shea:** We seek unanimous consent to extend — Mr Speaker, I move that we allow the member to continue for another hour.

**Mr Kormos:** The Speaker is going to rule there was unanimous consent.

**Mr Gerretsen:** Why should we when you voted against it?

**Mr Kormos:** I was careful to support that proposition. But I tell you, in case I didn't mention it, we're not going to be supporting Bill 105, certainly not in its present form.

**The Acting Speaker:** The member's time has expired.

**Mrs Marland:** It is indeed gratifying that the member for Welland-Thorold finally, in his very last sentence,



referred to the bill that he was supposed to be addressing for 90 minutes.

I want to put on the record a quote from the NDP Solicitor General, David Christopherson, that was in the Ottawa Citizen in December, 1993, because this is relevant to the previous speaker's comments. The quote is this, and it's a quote on fair financing of police services: "It is our intention to implement equitable police financing, which means all Ontarians pay their fair share of policing, and right now we don't have that. We'd like to obviously do it as quickly as possible because we'd like to institute fairness." The former Solicitor General, David Christopherson.

I'm tempted, in responding to the comments by the member for Welland-Thorold, to quote an old philosopher who once said, speaking on some words of wisdom, that, "Sometimes the relationship with the truth may be purely coincidental." In light of some of the things the member for Welland-Thorold has said this afternoon about what is government policy, what direction we are going, I think that quote is appropriate.

I also need to tell the member that over 200 police services board appointments have been made to date by our government. We have reappointed almost one third of all police services board appointees, many of whom are women. His own party, I might add, is somewhat sexist because they elected a man over a very capable woman. We have also put numerous qualified women on police services boards. I think it's interesting that you're talking about patronage and you're defending the appointment of Marion Dewar, who was a —

**The Acting Speaker:** The member's two minutes has expired. Further comments?

**Mr Bradley:** I found the member's speech most entertaining and enlightening throughout. He was able to deal with a number of issues. I heard him make mention in the latter part of his remarks to the Americanization of the ambulance service in Ontario. He would know that the company Rural/Metro Corp, just over the border in New York state, charges a \$218 flat fee for getting into the ambulance and getting basic life support, \$350 for advanced life support. They charge mileage of \$5.45 a mile, and equipment, if you want oxygen, you pay \$26.80, or an IV.

I'm wondering whether the member believes this is the opening of the door to the Americanization of the system of health care in this province and whether he believes the undertaking of the Minister of Health that somehow these prices won't be increased, that this service will not be delisted or removed from OHIP coverage, and people will not have to pay up front before they get into the ambulance.

I know he mentioned this, an issue that I raised in the House this afternoon. I'd like his comments on that certainly, and I want to know whether he is concerned about the fact that the president of the press gallery, Mr Richard Brennan, was interrogated by the Ontario Provincial Police over a report that he was able to obtain and look at which dealt with the influence of the underworld or the criminal element in gambling enterprises in the province, a report that we in the opposition wanted to demonstrate why the government shouldn't allow VLTs

in every bar, in every restaurant, on every street in every municipality in Ontario.

1800

**Mr Wildman:** I wanted to congratulate my colleague from Welland-Thorold for a very comprehensive, insightful, imaginative exposé of this government's whole approach. I was pleased that he had the time to put it in the context of the overall campaign of this government to downsize and privatize and unload and download throughout the province. I think it was very important that we understand, as he said a number of times during his presentation, that one cannot understand the whole picture by simply looking at one piece of the puzzle, that it was important we understand that Bill 105 is part of an overall downloading by this government, an approach that I think had, as he said, ramifications for the future of policing in this province that are quite disturbing.

I note that the member, who I know has some significant expertise and experience in this regard, was talking about what it may be in future with regard to politicizing of the police. He indicated that on some occasions even now, with the provincial government having the main responsibility for policing in the province, it appears on a couple of occasions with, I think he used the term "a wink and a nod," the powers that be have been able to influence the police into laying charges which some might say were rather frivolous, such as, I understand, planting seeds at Queen's Park.

I also understand, although I find it very hard to believe, that it appears the Attorney General may have influenced or suggested the charge of two members of this Legislature.

**The Acting Speaker:** The member's time has expired.

**Mr Bert Johnson (Perth):** I would request, actually I would demand, the latitude of this House to wander from my remarks to the question of Bill 105 as did the Speaker who put in the last hour and a half. I would like to make this comment that we have listened to the epistle according to Saint Peter and that yes, my mom and dad told me about the 1960s. I would like to put on record that today is my father's birthday. He was born in the year 1902. He's seen a lot of the good, the bad and the ugly of Ontario, and I'm sure he feels very comforted in the changes that our Solicitor General is proposing in Bill 105.

Many municipalities for years and years have asked that we even the playing field for the costs of policing. Indeed, the member across in the last hour and a half didn't mention how, by giving communities and municipalities the residential taxes to pay for these costs, they may very well come out having more money than they do now. I think he should maybe clear that up in his remarks, because it is a setoff. Yes, communities are going to have to pay for their policing who didn't have to pay for it before, and yes, municipalities would have to pass over their education dollars like they did in the past.

**The Acting Speaker:** The Chair recognizes the member for Welland-Thorold. Make your two-minute summation.

**Mr Kormos:** I want to wish a very happy birthday to Mr Johnson, who should be 95 today, or thereabouts.



**Mr Bert Johnson:** Not yet. He's 94.

**Mr Preston:** Mr Speaker, on a point of order: I brought up a point of order a while ago. The Hansard cannot deliver it until Monday morning, but the former Speaker gave the opportunity to the member to withdraw his remarks and he chose to ignore it. I would like to give the member the opportunity —

**The Acting Speaker:** I'd ask the member for Brant-Haldimand to take his seat.

**Mr Preston:** I was just going to give him the opportunity —

**The Acting Speaker:** I'd ask you to take your seat. I'd have the member know further that the Chair previously ruled on that point of order and did not find it to be such. I would ask the member for Welland-Thorold to sum up in his concluding remarks.

**Mr Kormos:** Thank you kindly, Speaker. I appreciate the comments made by my friends; those by my detractors, I recognize them for what they're intended to be. It doesn't particularly phase me.

I'm concerned about the defensiveness of this government with respect to its record concerning women. I say this government has an atrocious record when it comes to the role of women in boards, agencies, commissions, including police services boards, and more so in terms of the protection of women who are the victims of abuse and violence.

This Bill 105 is going to be the subject matter of significant debate. It's also necessary that it be put out to committee. We've only been able to touch the surface, and I know I'll have opportunities to address other portions, but it's bad law and it's bad policy.

**Mr Bert Johnson:** Mr Speaker, on a point of order: I said my father was born in the year 1902. It was 1903.

**The Acting Speaker:** The record stands corrected. Bert, you should have known.

## ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

**The Acting Speaker (Mr John O'Toole):** Pursuant to standing order 34, the question that this House do now adjourn is deemed to have been made. Further, the member for Welland-Thorold has given notice of dissatisfaction with the answer to a question given yesterday by the Premier. The member has up to five minutes to make his point on this matter and the Premier or his parliamentary assistant may reply for up to five minutes.

## FAMILY SUPPORT PLAN

**Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold):** I should indicate that it was with the unanimous consent of the House that Ms Martel's, the member for Sudbury East's, request for what's colloquially known as a late show was given me so that I could speak on her behalf. She can't be here at 6 o'clock.

I'm happy that the parliamentary assistant to the Premier is here today to defend the Premier for the Premier's inability to speak in a straightforward way in response to the question of Ms Martel, the member for Sudbury East, about the foulup, the botch-up, the mess,

the complete state of chaos, the bungling of the family support plan up in Downsview.

It's about time, because everybody else in the province knows it. The videotape which has been broadcast over and over again on news broadcasts, on public affairs shows, who knows, may have made it into some under-world of samizdat, where what type of strange personalities would want to have taped off television the videotape of Ms Martel and me going to the family support plan office and revealing that the emperor has no clothes, that the system wasn't operational, wasn't close to operational, in fact was in a total, pathetic, complete shambles.

The Premier likes to shrug off his Attorney General's incompetence. The Premier wants to just dismiss the agony and pain and suffering of literally thousands now of women and their kids who haven't received moneys owed to them because the Attorney General bungled. He fouled up his operation of the family support plan. I understand that it's hard for the Attorney General, after having stood in this House day after day after day telling the whole world or anybody who would care to listen that the plan was operative, that his mega-FSP was working. He said that day after day. I understand it's hard for him. Having been confronted with the videotape and the reality of the fact that he simply mismanaged the whole project, it's hard to apologize and say that he was wrong. I understand that. It's even harder, I suppose, for the Premier — or as hard for the Premier — to acknowledge that this government screwed up the FSP. They bungled it. It was gone.

## 1810

I also appreciate that the parliamentary assistant, who makes a little stipend for being the PA — here he is. He didn't screw it up; the Attorney General screwed up the plan. He didn't stand in the House and dismiss Ms Martel and her concerns about the plan with a sense of arrogance. I suspect the parliamentary assistant has as much concern about the state of that family support plan, after the Attorney General shut down eight regional offices and laid off 290 staff. I think — I don't know this for a fact — the parliamentary assistant was receiving phone calls at his constituency office too, and I know he's concerned about stuff like that.

He stands up today and talks about the new plan, you know, the new bill, Mr Parliamentary Assistant, the one that was passed with much fanfare but which still isn't operative because you haven't got the structure to put it into effect. The plan is still lamely struggling along. That plan would have to be a Lazarus to be operative, because it was virtually euthanized by the Attorney General — I was going to say former Attorney General but he's not the former Attorney General yet.

I say it's arrogant, it's cynical and it's just not fair to the people of this province for this government to try to hide that dirty little secret at Downsview when the whistle's been blown and the videotape has been broadcast again and again. The plan was out of order. It had been out of order for months. The Attorney General either had no idea what was going on in Downsview — I must say nobody up there seemed to know who he was — or didn't care.



**The Acting Speaker:** The member's time has expired. The Chair recognizes the parliamentary assistant to the Premier, the member for Brampton South.

**Mr Tony Clement (Brampton South):** It is with a considerable amount of surprise that I stand here this evening to participate in this particular late show, but I thank the honourable member for Welland-Thorold for his comments. They are always valuable in this chamber of debate.

The honourable member has made reference to his particular views about what he called the chaos in the family support plan system. My colleague from Milton, the honourable member for Halton North, seemed to recall that it's something like Dante's *Inferno*, which reminded me of a quote that Dante made in *Paradiso* where he said, "Be as a strong tower that never bows its head to the force of the wind." I will not bow my head to the force of the wind in this chamber. I want to assure the honourable member of that.

If there is a Dante's *Inferno* or a chaos that has been created, it has been inherited from the previous regime. There were a number of grave faults that were found in the family support plan which divided children from the recompense they needed in order to live a life that was necessary in our society. That was something that our government made great plans, with alacrity, to create a system that would work for the children of our province.

Sometimes plans go awry, but the plans went awry because his party, the member for Welland-Thorold's party, held up in this House for days and days the final plan while children waited and their mothers and their fathers waited for a plan that would work. They waited

for a solution from the government. We came up with a solution that bore down on those who were abusing the system, that cleaned up some of the administrative mess that was left by the former regime and then put into place a system that would allow those who had no need of the government and had no need of the plan in force to opt out of that plan so they can make their own private arrangements. But for those who genuinely did need the plan to be there, there was the option of the family support plan in a new and improved form.

We have all had telephone calls in our offices of people who unfortunately did not get the money as quickly as they had anticipated, and the Attorney General has made mention of the fact in this House that we regret that and we are seeking to solve those problems. I might add, though, that my predecessor, my colleagues' predecessors, had the same telephone calls. In fact, the telephone calls are now being answered with 25% greater efficiency than they were the day before this legislation came into effect.

Are there problems to be solved? Yes, there are. I beseech the honourable member for Welland-Thorold to be part of a positive and constructive way that we can solve the problems if they still do exist. But they do not exist because of the fault of our government; they exist because of the faults in the system which we are seeking to cure. The Premier merely made mention of that fact today.

**The Acting Speaker:** There being no further matter to debate, I deem the motion to adjourn to be carried. The House stands adjourned until 1:30 next Monday afternoon.

*The House adjourned at 1817.*



# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

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Brant-Haldimand	Preston, Peter L. (PC)	Kitchener	Wettlaufer, Wayne (PC)
Brantford	Johnson, Ron (PC)	Kitchener-Wilmot	Leadston, Gary L. (PC)
Bruce	Fisher, Barbara (PC)	Lake Nipigon / Lac-Nipigon	Pouliot, Gilles (ND)
Burlington South / -Sud	<b>Jackson, Hon / L'hon Cameron (PC)</b> Minister without Portfolio (seniors issues) / ministre sans portefeuille (affaires des personnes âgées)	Lambton	Beaubien, Marcel (PC)
Cambridge	Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Lanark-Renfrew	Jordan, W. Leo (PC)
Carleton	<b>Sterling, Hon / L'hon Norman W. (PC)</b> Minister of Environment and Energy / ministre de l'Environnement et de l'Énergie	Lawrence	Cordiano, Joseph (L)
Carleton East / -Est	Morin, Gilles E. (L)	Leeds-Grenville	<b>Runciman, Hon / L'hon Robert W. (PC)</b> Solicitor General and Minister of Correctional Services / solliciteur général et ministre des Services correctionnels
Chatham-Kent	Carroll, Jack (PC)	Lincoln	Sheehan, Frank (PC)
Cochrane North / -Nord	Wood, Len (ND)	London Centre / -Centre	Boyd, Marion (ND)
Cochrane South / -Sud	Bisson, Gilles (ND)	London North / -Nord	<b>Cunningham, Hon / L'hon Dianne (PC)</b> Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, minister responsible for women's issues / ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales, ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Comwall	Cleary, John C. (L)	London South / -Sud	Wood, Bob (PC)
Don Mills	<b>Johnson, Hon / L'hon David (PC)</b> Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Minister of Health, government House leader / président du Conseil de gestion, ministre de la Santé, leader parlementaire du gouvernement	Markham	<b>Tsubouchi, Hon / L'hon David H. (PC)</b> Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations / ministre de la Consommation et du Commerce
Dovercourt	Silipo, Tony (ND)	Middlesex	Smith, Bruce (PC)
Downsview	Castrilli, Annamaria (L)	Mississauga East / -Est	DeFaria, Carl (PC)
Dufferin-Peel	Tilson, David (PC)	Mississauga North / -Nord	<b>Snobelen, Hon / L'hon John (PC)</b> Minister of Education and Training / ministère de l'Éducation et de la Formation
Durham Centre / -Centre	Flaherty, Jim (PC)	Mississauga South / -Sud	Marland, Margaret (PC)
Durham East / -Est	O'Toole, John R. (PC)	Mississauga West / -Ouest	<b>Sampson, Hon / L'hon Rob (PC)</b> Minister without Portfolio (privatization) / ministre sans portefeuille (privatisation)
Durham West / -Ouest	<b>Ecker, Hon / L'hon Janet (PC)</b> Minister of Community and Social Services / ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires	Muskoka-Georgian Bay / Muskoka-Baie-Georgienne	Grimmett, Bill (PC)
Durham-York	Munro, Julia (PC)	Nepean	Baird, John R. (PC)
Eglinton	<b>Saunderson, Hon / L'hon William (PC)</b> Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism / ministre du Développement économique, du Commerce et du Tourisme	Niagara Falls	Maves, Bart (PC)
Elgin	North, Peter (Ind)	Niagara South / -Sud	Hudak, Tim (PC)
Essex-Kent	Hoy, Pat (L)	Nickel Belt	Laughren, Floyd (ND)
Essex South / -Sud	Crozier, Bruce (L)	Nipissing	<b>Harris, Hon / L'hon Michael D. (PC)</b> Premier and President of the Executive Council / premier ministre et président du Conseil exécutif
Etobicoke-Humber	Ford, Douglas B. (PC)	Norfolk	Barrett, Toby (PC)
Etobicoke-Lakeshore	Kells, Morley (PC)	Northumberland	Galt, Doug (PC)
Etobicoke-Rexdale	Hastings, John (PC)	Oakville South / -Sud	Carr, Gary (PC)
Etobicoke West / -Ouest	<b>Stockwell, Hon / L'hon Chris (PC)</b> Speaker / Président	Oakwood	Colle, Mike (L)
Fort William	McLeod, Lyn (L)	Oriole	Caplan, Elinor (L)
Fort York	Marchese, Rosario (ND)	Oshawa	Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)
Frontenac-Addington	Vankoughnet, Bill (PC)	Ottawa Centre / -Centre	Patten, Richard (L)
Grey-Owen Sound	Murdoch, Bill (PC)	Ottawa East / -Est	Grandmaître, Bernard (L)
Guelph	Elliott, Brenda (PC)	Ottawa-Rideau	Guzzo, Garry J. (PC)
Halton Centre / -Centre	Young, Terence H. (PC)	Ottawa South / -Sud	McGuinty, Dalton (L) Leader of the Opposition / chef de l'opposition
Halton North / -Nord	Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Ottawa West / -Ouest	Chiarelli, Robert (L)
Hamilton Centre / -Centre	Christopherson, David (ND)		
Hamilton East / -Est	Agostino, Dominic (L)		
Hamilton Mountain	Pettit, Trevor (PC)		
Hamilton West / -Ouest	Ross, Lillian (PC)		



Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti	Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti
Oxford	Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Scarborough North / -Nord	Curling, Alvin (L)
Parkdale	Ruprecht, Tony (L)	Scarborough West / -Ouest	Brown, Jim (PC)
Parry Sound	<b>Eves, Hon / L'hon Ernie L.</b> (PC) Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance / vice-premier ministre, ministre des Finances	Simcoe Centre / -Centre	Tascona, Joseph N. (PC)
Perth	Johnson, Bert (PC)	Simcoe East / -Est	McLean, Allan K. (PC)
Peterborough	Stewart, R. Gary (PC)	Simcoe West / -Ouest	Wilson, Jim (PC)
Port Arthur	Gravelle, Michael (L)	Sudbury	Bartolucci, Rick (L)
Prescott and Russell / Prescott et Russell	Lalonde, Jean-Marc (L)	Sudbury East / -Est	Martel, Shelley (ND)
Prince Edward-Lennox- South Hastings / Prince Edward-Lennox- Hastings-Sud	Fox, Gary (PC)	Timiskaming	Ramsay, David (L)
Quinte	Rollins, E.J. Douglas (PC)	Victoria-Haliburton	<b>Hodgson, Hon / L'hon Chris</b> (PC) Minister of Natural Resources, Minister of Northern Development and Mines / ministre des Richesses naturelles, ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Rainy River	Hampton, Howard (ND) Leader of the New Democratic Party / Chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique	Waterloo North / -Nord	<b>Witmer, Hon / L'hon Elizabeth</b> (PC) Minister of Labour / ministre du Travail
Renfrew North / -Nord	Conway, Sean G. (L)	Welland-Thorold	Kormos, Peter (ND)
Riverdale	Churley, Marilyn (ND)	Wellington	Arnott, Ted (PC)
S-D-G & East Grenville / S-D-G et Grenville-Est	<b>Villeneuve, Hon / L'hon Noble</b> (PC) Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, minister responsible for francophone affairs / ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales, ministre délégué aux Affaires francophones	Wentworth East / -Est	Doyle, Ed (PC)
St Andrew-St Patrick	Bassett, Isabel (PC)	Wentworth North / -Nord	Skarica, Toni (PC)
St Catharines	Bradley, James J. (L)	Willowdale	<b>Harnick, Hon / L'hon Charles</b> (PC) Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs / procureur général, ministre délégué aux Affaires autochtones
St Catharines-Brock	Froese, Tom (PC)	Wilson Heights	Kwinter, Monte (L)
St George-St David	<b>Leach, Hon / L'hon Al</b> (PC) Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement	Windsor-Riverside	Vacant
Samia	Boushy, Dave (PC)	Windsor-Sandwich	Pupatello, Sandra (L)
Sault Ste Marie / Sault-Sainte-Marie	Martin, Tony (ND)	Windsor-Walkerville	Duncan, Dwight (L)
Scarborough-Agincourt	Phillips, Gerry (L)	York Centre / -Centre	<b>Palladini, Hon / L'hon Al</b> (PC) Minister of Transportation / ministre des Transports
Scarborough Centre / -Centre	Newman, Dan (PC)	York East / -Est	Parker, John L. (PC)
Scarborough East / -Est	Gilchrist, Steve (PC)	York Mills	Tumbull, David (PC)
Scarborough-Ellesmere	<b>Mushinski, Hon / L'hon Marilyn</b> (PC) Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation / ministre des Affaires civiques, de la Culture et des Loisirs	York-Mackenzie	Klees, Frank (PC)
		Yorkview	Sergio, Mario (L)
		York South / -Sud	Kennedy, Gerard (L)

A list arranged by members' surnames and including all responsibilities of each member appears in the first and last issues of each session and on the first Monday of each month.

Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.



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No. 163

N° 163

ISSN 1180-2987

## Legislative Assembly of Ontario

First Session, 36th Parliament

## Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

Première session, 36<sup>e</sup> législature

# Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

# Journal des débats (Hansard)

Monday 17 February 1997

Lundi 17 février 1997



Speaker  
Honourable Chris Stockwell

Président  
L'honorable Chris Stockwell

Clerk  
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier  
Claude L. DesRosiers



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# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 17 February 1997

# ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 17 février 1997

*The House met at 1333.*

*Prayers.*

## MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

### NORTHERN HEALTH SERVICES

**Mr Frank Miclash (Kenora):** My statement is directed to the Premier. It's clear to all concerned that you have not kept your promise to northern residents to protect their health care. On page 6 of your election document *A Voice for the North*, you stated, "In order to preserve and enhance health care services for the people of northern Ontario, a Mike Harris government will guarantee current levels of health care spending." You went on to state in big, bold letters that "Not one cent will be cut."

How do you explain this to the people throughout the northwest who are now being faced with additional cuts to their hospital budgets? Let me give you a few examples: Lake of the Woods District Hospital in Kenora, more than \$700,000 in cuts; Dryden hospital, more than \$625,000 in cuts; Sioux Lookout is facing a \$210,000 cut in its budget; Red Lake will lose more than \$125,000; Fort Frances, more than \$654,000; and Atikokan, some \$60,000 out of its budgets.

Premier, it is important for you to understand that the people residing in the northwest are not impressed with what you are doing. That is why, last Friday, I launched a postcard campaign that called upon you to keep your promise not to cut one cent from health care.

My constituents are telling me they will no longer sit by while you and your government dismantle their communities and their health care system. Premier, you must understand that you have placed accessible, quality health care in northwestern Ontario in jeopardy so that you can pay for your 30% tax cut for your friends on Bay Street.

### ST ALBERT ADULT LEARNING CENTRE

**Ms Shelley Martel (Sudbury East):** The Conservative government cuts to education are have a profound impact in the classroom. In Sudbury the next potential victims appear to be the adult learners at St Albert Adult Learning Centre.

St Albert's is operated by the Sudbury separate school board. It opened four years ago in an old elementary school designed for 200 students. There are now 1,000 adult learners registered onsite and offsite.

The centre serves adults from ages 18 to 74 and provides adult basic literacy and numeracy, secondary credits towards OSSD, upgrading credits beyond a

diploma, English as a second language, co-op placements, computer programming, and contract work for local businesses. It supports an onsite day care, food bank, clothing depot, counselling onsite and offsite, and has extensive referral and placement partnerships with local service agencies and businesses.

In 1996 St Albert Adult Learning Centre was named national institution of the year by the Canadian Association for Community Education. The principal, Teresa Stewart, was named outstanding national educator of the year.

But the cuts to grants for adult learners and the new changes in funding for adult basic literacy and numeracy are putting St Albert's at risk. The separate school board has now been forced to seriously consider closing the centre and dismantling the programming. This unique model of adult education, which generated a national award, may be totally destroyed.

The Conservative government cannot continue to pretend its cuts and policy decisions are not affecting the classroom. The 1,000 students and staff at St Albert's know better.

### SENIOR CITIZENS' HOUSING

**Mrs Brenda Elliott (Guelph):** Nestled on a quiet residential street on an eight-acre site in Guelph is an award-winning seniors' residence operated by the Elliott Group — no relation, by the way.

Recently, the Elliott was chosen by Simon Fraser University gerontology researchers to be part of a study on housing options for seniors. The Elliott was established in 1903 as a home for the aged. It has evolved over the years to offer varied levels of care in one place. Today there are three divisions: the Ellridge offers independent condominium-style living, the Ellington offers semi-independent living with support services, and the Elliott offers full-care nursing.

Simon Fraser University has spent the last several months searching across Canada for the most innovative and exemplary housing projects for seniors. The Elliott is one of the 24 most outstanding projects to be studied. It's unique in that its non-profit charitable status is without a specific charity group, nor does it receive municipal funding. Its only funding comes from the Ministry of Health for medical services.

The Elliott was also recognized for its innovative contributions to seniors care, and last year it received an award for excellence from the Ontario Association of Homes and Services for Seniors.

It is my pleasure to extend congratulations to David Hicks, the CEO of the Elliott, to his staff, and to wish



continued success for the Elliott. Your care for seniors in Guelph is admired and appreciated.

### COURT FACILITY

**Mr John C. Cleary (Cornwall):** It was long coming and it was announced on September 20 that the government would finally proceed with the construction of a new courthouse in Cornwall to replace and consolidate existing facilities, dangerously overcrowded.

But now that the government is getting around to the actual tendering, the news may not be so bright. The criteria limit interested contractors to submit only previous work of \$5 million or more, and only work completed since 1990, therefore excluding basically every contractor in the Cornwall area.

Since the ministry is aware of the local situation, local contractors are concerned that the ministry is sidestepping all local contractors in favour of a mega-contractor. If the ministry is to proceed with ignoring Cornwall-area contractors, whose talents and experience would fully complete the job successfully, this is bad news for our area: bad for the local contractors, bad for local construction workers and bad for the local economy.

I faxed over an urgent request for a meeting on this last Thursday, but neither the minister nor his staff have replied yet. This same minister promised a week ago, on January 29, that he would get back to me about dialysis for Cornwall, and I'm still waiting for that too.

Minister, don't stall. The closing for submissions is Thursday, February 20 —

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Thank you.

1340

### CASINOS

**Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie):** The government is about to announce the introduction of charitable casinos to Ontario either today or tomorrow. This disturbs me greatly, as it disturbs many citizens of my community and the leadership in my community, for a couple of reasons.

One in particular is the issue of the cuts this government has made to communities and organizations that deliver services to the very poor and vulnerable across our province. To now think that they're going to make up that difference by way of introducing charitable casinos across the province is ludicrous. To think for a minute that rich Ontario, the breadbasket of our country, will now turn to charitable casinos to fund social services, health care, education and so many other things that we take for granted across this province is ludicrous, to say the least.

The second reason that we in the Sault are very concerned about the introduction of charitable casinos is that by introducing charitable casinos, you're moving away from the introduction of strategically placed permanent casinos. Our community thought we might be privileged to have one. We already have a casino across the river that is taking money out of our city. A permanent casino in the Sault would have generated many jobs for people and money for the economy of my city, Sault Ste Marie. This won't.

### WASTE MANAGEMENT

**Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland):** The Northumberland county waste recovery facility has been successful since its opening back in April 1996. Recently the Minister of Environment and Energy, the Honourable Norm Sterling, joined with me to tour the plant, where we saw some remarkable recycling technology. Fully 80% of the waste stream coming into the plant is now recycled or reused. This is the highest material recovery rate in Ontario.

Needless to say, this technology is good news for the environment. In its first eight months of operation more than 7,000 metric tonnes of waste material were diverted from local landfill sites. This figure is expected to rise to over 11,000 metric tonnes in 1997.

The innovative wet-dry collection system, which has moved us one step beyond the blue box program, has also cut the cost of garbage collection in half. This new facility is proving so efficient that the county is now negotiating with neighbouring municipalities to process waste material collected outside of Northumberland.

That is what I call entrepreneurial government, and I'm pleased that my home riding is now setting an example for a more cost-effective approach to waste management services.

I would urge other members of this House and municipal politicians across the province to visit us in Northumberland and experience first hand the future of waste management technology in Ontario.

### HEALTH CARE FUNDING

**Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor-Sandwich):** On Thursday the people of Windsor-Sandwich and many people from across Essex county spent the evening at Windsor Regional Hospital in the auditorium discussing the significant cuts made by the Harris government and its effect on people.

I'd like to present the Minister of Health with only the first segment of one of a number of postcards that are coming back. The postcard depicts someone going in for emergency service at Windsor Regional Hospital: "Fact: The Premier promised not one cent would be cut from health care. Fact: Windsor-Essex county is underfunded by a minimum of \$118 million a year. Fact: That works out to \$122 per person in Essex county. Fact: Windsor-Essex receives the lowest hospital funding per capita for any community over 200,000 people."

The meagre announcement that designated Windsor-Essex as an underserved area for doctors does not solve our problems today and won't solve our problems in six months.

To the Minister of Health I say this is one of the most significant issues ever to hit Ontario. When I bring forward my private member's resolution on February 27 it will call for a stop to the cutting of base funding for hospitals. You must replace the services in the community before those services disappear. We heard from family members in Windsor-Essex and they are worried.



## SENIOR CITIZENS' HOUSING

**Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold):** This morning I joined with members of SSTOP, Seniors and Supporters Together Opposing Privatization, down in Welland at the Lions Club as they announced their kickoff of a campaign to fight the privatization of Niagara's publicly owned, regionally operated seniors' homes.

We've got six seniors' homes down in Niagara and the region has been operating seniors' facilities for over a century now. These seniors' homes, especially under the leadership of Doug Rapelje, have obtained a reputation worldwide as being innovative and leaders in the provision of care for seniors: our folks, our grandfolks and, as we age, our spouses.

This government, the Harris Tories, by downloading over \$73 million on the taxpayers of Niagara region is also provoking the privatization and the selloff of our seniors' homes. I tell you, seniors and their families in Niagara are mad as hell and they're not going to tolerate it. Seniors are mobilizing there to tell their regional government no to privatization, no to the Mike Harris agenda of attacks on health care across the board, and in this instance very specifically targeting our senior citizens.

Niagara region is one of the oldest regions in all of Ontario in terms of the age of population. We have, through the grace of the last government, now undertaken the building of Rapelje Lodge, a seventh home.

The downloading of this government is nothing more than an all-out attack on seniors, and I tell you we're going to fight them.

## SMALL BUSINESS

**Mr Joseph Spina (Brampton North):** As the parliamentary assistant for small business, I hear often of the overwhelming need in our economy to increase access to capital in order for small business to expand and create jobs.

In the May 1996 budget, the Minister of Finance asked the Honourable Rob Sampson and myself to co-chair a committee on small business access to capital. Minister Eves wanted us to look at innovative ideas to help finance emerging small business. I want to thank Jim Brown from Scarborough West, Tom Froese from St Catharines-Brock and John O'Toole from Durham East for assisting us with this task.

Our report is completed, and our recommendations recognize the need to increase private sector competition in the supply of capital, the need to increase capital by reducing regulatory and institutional barriers, the need to further reduce compliance costs and the paper burden for small business and the need to continue to cut taxes.

There are 17 recommendations in the report, one of which is the establishment of the community small business venture capital fund. We're also recommending tax incentives to encourage the formation of these funds with a strong community focus.

These recommendations are part of the Minister of Finance's pre-budget consultations. We are asking all interested Ontarians for their comments and their advice on this report and the actions our government can take to ensure that small business gets the financing it needs to grow and —

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Thank you very much.

## LEGISLATIVE PAGES

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** I'd like to take this opportunity to introduce and ask you to welcome the ninth group of pages to serve the 36th Parliament of Ontario: Darlene Aitchison, Bruce; Alan Chan, York Mills; Caitlin Cooper, Parry Sound; Allison Davey, Durham-York; Sabrina Davidson, Windsor-Walkerville; Ashleigh Fish, Burlington South; Matthew Fuller, Wellington; Colin Imrie, Peterborough; Michael LeBlanc, York-Mackenzie; Aimee Leonard, Sudbury; Rachel Lowery, Brantford; Jennifer McLean, Simcoe East; Andrew Menoguzzi, Willowdale; David Moon, Brampton South; Marjorie-B. Moran, Etobicoke-Lakeshore; Lucas Parafianowicz, St Catharines; Melissa Semplonius, Durham East; Danila Shaw, Scarborough-Agincourt; Robert Sipkema, Elgin; Charles Summers, Quinte. Welcome.

1350

## VISITOR

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** I would like to inform the members of the Legislative Assembly that we have in the Speaker's gallery today Dr Manuela Aguiar, a member of Parliament in the Portugal National Assembly and chair of the committee of the European Parliamentary Council on Migration and Population Demography. Welcome.

## SPEAKER'S RULING

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** On February 6, 1997, the member for St Catharines, Mr Bradley, rose on a question of privilege with respect to government-sponsored television commercials.

I have now had the opportunity to review the commercial in question. In addition, I reviewed my ruling of January 22 with respect to a point of privilege raised concerning other television commercials.

In my view, the commercial relating to education that the member for St Catharines brought to my attention does not attempt by improper means to influence members in their parliamentary conduct and does not impede freedom of speech in this place, nor does it relate to any specific parliamentary proceeding.

The commercial is not unlike those about which concern was raised previously in this House, in that it explains the government's philosophy and plans in a general way.

I find therefore that the member for St Catharines does not have a prima facie case of privilege.

## ORAL QUESTIONS

## ASSISTED HOUSING

**Mr Joseph Cordiano (Lawrence):** My question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, and I see he's not here. Oh, he's hiding in the wings? Your pres-



ence is very much needed. I don't know if it's appreciated these days, but it's needed.

Minister, it's now clear to everyone that your plan to dump social housing on to municipalities will cost municipal taxpayers an additional \$1 billion. Metro alone estimates that it will cost it \$365 million. Currently, you're claiming there will be provincial standards set to maintain social housing, but now you expect municipalities and taxpayers, municipal property taxpayers in particular, to foot the bill to maintain those standards.

For the last month, expert after expert, municipality after municipality have been telling you that they cannot assume these additional burdens, these additional costs. It will simply be too much, and without increasing property taxes there's no way they can sustain these costs.

I ask you, who will be sacrificed? Will it be property taxpayers or will it be social housing?

**Hon Al Leach (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing):** I can understand why some of the municipalities may be concerned about doing the repairs to social housing, social housing that has been allowed to go into total disrepair over the last decade. It is going to take a substantial amount of money to put that social housing back into fit condition. We recognize that.

The federal government also recognizes that the senior levels of government should not be in the social housing business. The federal Liberals announced in their throne speech last year that they wanted to get out of the social housing business and devolve it down to the province. We are presently in negotiations with the federal government and with the municipal government on how best to achieve that, ensuring that the stock is put back into good shape and the municipalities are protected during the process.

**Mr Cordiano:** There's just no justifiable answer that the minister has given. There's no answer in what he says. There's no answer for municipalities; there's no answer for municipal property taxpayers. Let's be clear here. What you're saying is that you'll set the standards provincially and the property taxpayers can pay for your standards. That's what you're saying to municipal property taxpayers. What you're saying as well is that you'll set all the standards right across this province and you don't care if they happen to foot the bill for these additional standards that will be maintained. In other words, you want to take the credit but you're going to let municipalities do the dirty work for you to pay for these standards.

Minister, if municipalities ignore your standards because they choose not to overburden their property taxpayers with additional costs, how will you maintain your provincial standards? You say that you're going to maintain them, that they will be implemented and that social housing will be preserved. How will that happen if municipalities fail to increase property taxes to pay for your costs?

**Hon Mr Leach:** I should point out to the member opposite, as I mentioned in the first answer, that we're presently negotiating with the federal government and the municipalities as to how social housing would be devolved down to the municipalities. The federal government contributes a sizeable amount of money to the

maintenance and operation of social housing at the present time. We intend to sit down with them and ensure that that money continues to flow from the federal government through the province to the municipalities so there will be funds available to help them maintain that housing stock.

Those negotiations have just started. Any municipalities that state at this point in time that they categorically know what the cost of social housing is going to be to them is mistaken, because until such time as the negotiations are completed, nobody knows exactly what that cost will be.

**Mr Cordiano:** Let me be very clear with the minister: The cost, in no uncertain terms, is estimated to be \$1.4 billion. That's what the cost is, Minister. That's indisputable. What you're now saying is, "Oh I don't know what the cost is going to be and municipalities are just simply incorrect in saying they can't determine what the costs are." Quite frankly, we know what the costs are.

I want to turn your attention to the effects mega-dumping will have right across this province on people who are tenants. Let's talk about them for a moment, because your mega-dumping will increase property taxes not only for homeowners but for tenants as well. Their rents will go up as landlords pass on the cost of increased property taxes. Whatever scheme you're promoting under AVA as the panacea for tenants will be undermined by the additional costs that will have to be borne by all property taxpayers — homeowners and tenants alike. To add insult to injury, you are gutting rent controls. So I ask you to tell us exactly, how do you plan to protect tenants as a result of your mega-dumping?

**Hon Mr Leach:** If there is any one group of citizens that is going to be assisted by the changes we're making with our property tax reform, it would be tenants. In Metropolitan Toronto, tenants right now pay between four and five times the amount of property tax of a single-family homeowner. That has been allowed to go on for the last decade. You don't care about tenants; you have never cared about tenants. We're going to go in and put a new Tenant Protection Act in place. We're also going to put in place a new property tax system that will make life seem like a panacea for tenants compared to what they've had over the last decade.

## HOSPITAL BEDS

**Mr Sean G. Conway (Renfrew North):** My question is to the Minister of Health, and it concerns hospitals; more particularly it concerns hospital closures and bed closures. People across Ontario are quite concerned by one of the key planning instruments your government is using to shut down whole hospitals or to remove hundreds and thousands of beds from the system. You've got this new planning standard, this new hospital bed standard. My question again today is simply this: Can you tell the province today which Ontario hospitals today are meeting your new hospital bed planning standard?

**Hon David Johnson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Minister of Health, Government House Leader):** What I will say to the member opposite is that the former government set in motion the district



health councils across Ontario to determine, community by community on a community-based need, what should be done in terms of restructuring in our hospitals to ensure best value, best care to the people of those communities. This government has carried on with that process, has put in place a restructuring commission which is looking at the particular needs of a community, and those particular needs may vary from community to community. There have been no hospitals closed to this point, and certainly the restructuring commission is listening to the people and community in determining the needs of a community for hospital care.

1400

**Mr Conway:** You don't seem to understand, Minister, that your government has announced the closure of the Pembroke Civic Hospital, the Sudbury General Hospital, hospitals in Thunder Bay, and you're threatening to close hospitals throughout the Niagara Peninsula. Hardworking, good, law-abiding citizens in Ontario, who are very concerned by this hospital closure policy, want to know exactly on what basis you have gone into these communities and, as you've done in Pembroke, torn the guts out of the Pembroke Civic Hospital. The question remains. You've got a new hospital bed standard. Surely you can tell me and the people of Ontario on this winter day in February 1997 what Ontario hospitals are today meeting your new hospital bed planning standard.

**Hon David Johnson:** I will reiterate that there is no common standard across the province. The restructuring commission and the district health councils have looked community by community. In the case of Pembroke, the district health council went in and talked to the members of the community and determined what is required in that community. The restructuring commission has issued initial directives and there's still a consultation period going on in the case of Pembroke. But it is on a community-by-community basis to determine what sort of care is required, what sort of structure is required to best serve the people of individual communities, whether it's Thunder Bay, Sudbury, Pembroke, whatever community in Ontario.

**Mr Conway:** I believe, as do thousands of people in rural and northern Ontario, that your new hospital bed planning standard is overly aggressive and unrealistic and it particularly fails to take into account the geographic realities of northern and rural Ontario. When I look at the Pembroke report issued by your agent, the hospital restructuring commission, it couldn't be clearer to me that this new planning standard very much reflects the large urban communities of southern Ontario. But perhaps I'm just being a cynical oppositionist.

I invite you one last time, Minister, and most especially on behalf of the hardworking people in communities like Pembroke and particularly the hundreds of people who have worked for decades, and nearly a century at the Pembroke Civic Hospital, to prove me wrong and table in this House today a list of all Ontario hospitals that today meet your new planning standard.

**Hon David Johnson:** I'll say once again that there are no standards that must apply to every community in every nook and corner of the province. Obviously the circumstances differ in all of our communities and what

the restructuring commission is doing and what the district health councils are doing is developing what is required in their communities from the grass roots up. They're using the consultations within their communities to determine a better level of health care service, a better level of hospital support within their own particular community, to use the resources that are available more wisely and more effectively within their own communities.

## VISITORS

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** I'd like to take this opportunity to notify the House that in the east gallery is the ex-member for Sudbury, Mr James Gordon. Welcome. In the west gallery is the member for Oshawa in the previous administration, Mr Allan Pilkey. Welcome.

## HOSPITAL FINANCING

**Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River):** My question is for the Minister of Health as well. Yesterday I attended a meeting in Windsor with several health care providers and people concerned about the future of health care in the Windsor-Essex area. The minister will know that Windsor is well below the provincial average for hospital funding. Before the minister announced further hospital cuts of \$435 million for this year, hospitals in Windsor released figures which show that Windsor was already below the provincial average by \$42 million per year. Now the minister has cut hospital budgets even further. The minister says he is restructuring, but the fact of the matter is, Windsor has already restructured.

### *Interjections.*

**Mr Hampton:** Speaker, is there someone in the Liberal Party who doesn't want this question asked?

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Order. I appreciate it's difficult on the same side. I would ask that you allow the leader to put his question.

**Mr Hampton:** The Minister of Health says this is all about restructuring. The fact of the matter is that Windsor has already restructured their hospital system. They've already gone from five to three hospitals. Can the minister tell us why, after Windsor has already gone through restructuring, he wants to cut their budgets even more?

**Hon David Johnson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Minister of Health, Government House Leader):** Over a year ago the province set out a funding plan for the hospitals of Ontario. That was announced by the previous Minister of Health over one year ago today. It laid out amounts of money that would be available this fiscal year, the next fiscal year and for the fiscal year 1998-99. That is a program that will allow the hospitals to determine how much money is available so they can plan accordingly for services to their communities in the years ahead. The ministry has stuck to that program, and I must say that while there has been a bit of a challenge in some cases, the hospitals have reacted extremely well to that plan and are giving a superior quality of service to the people of Ontario.

**Mr Hampton:** The minister tries again not to answer the question. The fact of the matter is that hospitals in



Windsor have already restructured. They had already restructured before you took \$365 million away from hospitals last year and \$435 million additional that you're taking away this year.

I think you should go to Windsor and tell people there where you think they should make the cuts, because as health care providers pointed out on the weekend, there is a real problem in providing adequate psychiatric services for people and a real crisis looming in neo-natal intensive care. There are horror stories like patients having to call 911 from their hospital beds because nurses aren't available.

Minister, I think what you should do is you should go to Windsor. You should tell people why they're being forced to pay administrative fees in order to book surgery. Individual people are forced to pay administrative fees in order to book surgery. Will you go to Windsor? Since you insist these cuts can be made, will you go to Windsor and tell people there where these cuts should be made and how they can be made?

**Hon David Johnson:** I will say in general that hospitals are accommodating their funding in a number of different ways. Some hospitals have reduced the number of vice-presidents; some hospitals have cut the number of middle managers; some hospitals have combined administrations so that where formerly there were two or more administrations there's now one administration. There are many different ways that hospitals are accommodating the funding level.

I will also say that there are different circumstances in different communities. This ministry recognized an underservicing of family practitioners, general practitioners in Windsor last week by declaring Windsor to be underserved in terms of GPs, and will have a program to assist in that regard.

Finally, I'll say that the deputy minister did attend and did discuss this matter with the people in the Windsor hospital last week and, as a result, there will be a program review that will be carried out over the next 60 days to determine if any further course of action is required.

1410

**Mr Hampton:** It's interesting that everything the minister has outlined here has already been done in Windsor. Windsor has already restructured from five to three hospitals; Windsor has already gone through a process of eliminating management. Windsor has gone through all of that and more, yet this government insists on taking even more money out of hospital budgets in Windsor. In fact, Windsor is a perfect illustration of the contradiction in your story about restructuring. The fact is, not only are you taking money out of the system by restructuring, but in addition to that, on top of that, you are also cutting hospital budgets. That's really what is hurting in Windsor. Windsor is already at the bed ratio that your hospital restructuring commission says everybody should get to. Why would you want to cut them when they're already at that ratio?

Minister, it comes down to this: When that community has already done everything that's being asked in terms of hospital restructuring, why are you still trying to cut

more from their budgets? Why are you still trying to cut more from their health care?

**Hon David Johnson:** I will give credit to Windsor as one community that did get off the mark quickly and did take steps, I'm sure excellent steps, to address health care problems in their particular community. Certainly credit needs to be given in that regard. I will reiterate that the deputy minister has attended and has discussed these issues with the representatives of the hospitals from the Windsor area, and as a result there is a program review that's under way, a 60-day program review, that will involve representatives from the district health councils, the hospitals and the ministry. The outcome of that review will assist in determining any particular outcome for the Windsor hospitals.

**The Speaker:** New question. Leader of the third party.

**Mr Hampton:** My next question is to the minister responsible for community and social services. I ask the Minister of Health, though, if maybe he can explain to Windsor why it is he's conducting the review after he's sent them letters saying he's going to take more money.

**The Speaker:** Your question is to the minister, please.

#### MINISTRY OF COMMUNITY AND SOCIAL SERVICES CONTRACT

**Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River):** To the Minister of Community and Social Services, we understand you have signed a contract with Andersen Consulting, a very large American company based in Chicago. Minister, when was the request for proposals for this contract issued, when was the contract awarded and signed, and how much money is Andersen Consulting expected to save and how much money are they expected to get out of the welfare system?

**Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Community and Social Services):** I'd be quite pleased to give the honourable member all the pertinent details about requests for proposals and the procedures we follow when we're using private sector contractors to do any particular task. This is not new with community and social services, as the honourable member will know. But he would also, I would think, share our desire to have increased efficiencies in the technology that we have, in the information technology we use for the social service system. As he knows, it's a computerized system which is badly out of date, and because of that, there are many things — for example, we have inadvertent overpayments to people on welfare. I think it makes a lot more sense, rather than trying to claw that back from somebody on welfare, that we need improved computer technology to ensure that doesn't happen in the first place. That's the intent and the aim of the contract we have with Andersen.

**Mr Hampton:** The minister said she'd be happy to share with us the information on the contract. I'd like the minister to produce the information on the contract so that everyone in the House may have it. The minister tries to put a gloss on this and say it's about computers, but we know differently, from the experience of other provinces with Andersen Consulting. According to newspaper reports, this firm, Andersen Consulting, will be paid a portion of whatever they cut out of the social



assistance system over the next four years. In other words, they're operating on commission or operating on cost plus.

What's involved here is this: You're handing the delivery of social assistance over to municipalities. One of Andersen Consulting's specialties is the privatization of social assistance; that's what they do a lot of in the United States. Is this one of the carrots you will offer to municipalities as you negotiate the downloading of 50% of the costs of social assistance? Is that what it's all about, Minister, that you plan to privatize? Let's produce the contracts so we can see really what's happening here.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** I find it a little unusual that the honourable member, given that his government refused to produce any information on one of the biggest private sector contracts — Highway 407 was something like \$1 billion in public expenditures and they didn't wish to produce that.

But I think the honourable member misunderstands quite seriously what is happening here. First of all, we don't find anything wrong with incentive-based performance when we're dealing with either our own workers or with private sector contractors. Second, if we are going to find efficiencies and if we are going to find savings, I am sure he would agree that it would be much better to find those savings in administrative procedures; it would be much better to find those savings in improved computer technology. I am sure he is not expecting us to find savings out of reducing the services that we would like to provide to the people and the folks in need.

I would also like to remind the honourable member that contrary to what he keeps saying — he keeps saying previously we should —

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Thank you, Minister. Final supplementary. The member for Welland-Thorold.

**Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold):** This minister has spent her entire career attacking the poor rather than attacking poverty. Methinks that perhaps she's lost some of her taste for the slaughter and now wants to bring in an American consulting company to finish off the cull. She's prepared to line the pockets of Andersen Consulting, US, with taxpayers' money to carry on her attack on the poorest people in our society.

We know what happened in New Brunswick, because sources there indicate that part of what Andersen delivered there was a destaffing of the offices of community and social services. Nobody can get through to a live person. Everybody is caught up in computerized telephone processes, so all they can do is leave a message.

We know what happened when her colleague shut down eight regional offices of the family support plan and laid off 290 of their staff: Women and their children were left without moneys for rent and food and utilities and couldn't get through to anybody to resolve their problems. Is that what we've got to look forward to in your new revamped welfare system here in Ontario?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** I think there are a couple of points that the honourable member should remember. The Minister of Community and Social Services contracts out many services to private sector and non-profit services. That was something that was done under his government,

with all due respect, and it is something we have found has worked really well. So they did it.

Second, it is Mr Crombie who recommended contracting out welfare services, and Mr Hampton has stood in this House and said we should do everything Mr Crombie said. We rejected that particular recommendation of Mr Crombie's. Perhaps he's saying he's supporting it.

Finally, the Andersen contract is an initiative that their government started and we're following through with. If he has any concerns about it, perhaps he should ask his previous Minister of Community and Social Services.

#### ASSISTED HOUSING

**Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-Walkerville):** I have a question for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Last week we released numbers from your ministry that said the total cost of assisted housing in Ontario, the total provincial subsidy, was \$1.4 billion. You neither confirmed nor denied that.

In addition, we wonder, do you, sir, have a list, municipality by municipality, of the cost of provincial subsidy for public housing, private housing as well as for co-op housing?

**Hon Al Leach (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing):** If the member is inquiring if we have a list of the subsidies that we pay to each of the social housing functions in the province, yes, we do, and I'd be pleased to provide that list of subsidies to social housing groups, OHC. I am surprised you don't have that information readily available at this time. If they don't have it, Mr Speaker, I'd be glad to get it for them.

**Mr Duncan:** As a matter of fact, we do have the numbers, and as a matter of fact —

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** I'm surprised you're that shocked, actually.

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**Mr Duncan:** Minister, then you'll confirm these figures that have been provided by your ministry for the cost that's being downloaded to a variety of municipalities in Ontario: Durham region, 7,630 units, \$47 million; Hamilton-Wentworth, 13,350 units at \$57.9 million; Metro Toronto, 102,000 units, \$566 million; Ottawa-Carleton, 22,870 units, \$104 million; the mayor of Sudbury will be interested to know, 5,010 units at a cost of \$26,939,000; Thunder Bay, 5,260, \$31 million; Waterloo region, the Minister of Labour will be interested to know, 8,780 units, total cost, \$45,931,000.

Minister, will you now acknowledge that you're dumping an unbearable load on municipal property taxpayers across this province and will you confirm that these numbers —

**The Speaker:** Thank you, member for Windsor-Walkerville. I appreciate it. Minister?

**Hon Mr Leach:** The member for Windsor has a wonderful imagination. I got up here not 20 minutes ago and told his colleague that no municipality can say at this point in time what the costs of social housing will be in any particular community because we're in the process of negotiating with the federal government and with the municipalities on how cost-sharing will take place, how



federal moneys will flow from the federal government through to municipalities, how funding for needed capital repair will be done, for capital repair that's needed because you let it go to wrack and ruin over the last decade.

How can you sit there and say that social housing is falling apart when neither of these parties did anything over the last year to try and renovate the properties that are out there now? It's literally a disgrace that this housing has been allowed to go to this degree. We know that when we finish negotiations with the federal government and with the municipalities, everybody in this whole scenario is going to —

**The Speaker:** Minister, thank you very much.

New question, member for Fort York.

**Mr Rosario Marchese (Fort York):** My question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. There are 275,000 households that live in co-op and non-profit housing who are very worried about what's going to happen to them. Your government is the only jurisdiction in the world that is about to dump the responsibility for their homes on municipalities who don't have the money to look after them. Taxpayers are worried because you're handing them a ticking tax bomb. Interest rates are low now, but when they go up, who will pay? These buildings are getting older and when they need serious repair, who will pay?

The question to you, Minister, is to tell this House: Will the property taxpayer have to foot the bill for these increasing costs?

**Hon Mr Leach:** I'd just like to point out to the members opposite — they obviously haven't been staying in tune with what's been happening in the social housing field for many years — municipalities deliver social housing in many instances right now. Perhaps the member has heard of Cityhome in Toronto and Peel Living in Mississauga or the Metropolitan Toronto Housing Co, all of whom provide those services now.

As I mentioned earlier to my colleague from the Liberal Party, we're in the process of negotiating with the federal government how funding will take place, what moneys will be available from the federal government to flow through, what programs will be developed to ensure that the rundown stock that you allowed to go to wrack and ruin is rebuilt so that people can live in decent housing for a change, something they haven't been able to do for the last decade. We will make sure through our negotiations that we will protect tenants and people who live in social housing, something that you failed to do.

**Mr Marchese:** It's a very interesting thing to hear this minister saying they're going to protect them, and it's very interesting that they're about to dump MTHA, non-profit and cooperative homes down to the municipal level and they say he's going to protect them somehow. How are you doing that when you're passing down millions and millions of dollars worth of repairs just in MTHA alone? How does he have the nerve to say that? I'm not quite clear.

Then he says, "We're negotiating with the federal level of government." Well, these people at the federal level are about to wash their hands. You wait and see. Mark my words: As soon as this federal election is over, they will dump this responsibility on to this government,

which is quite willing to dump it down to the municipal level. That negotiation means the protections the people are looking for are not going to be there, so no one who lives in social housing, that which is controlled by the federal level of government through co-ops and the funding it passes on to provincial governments, no one at that level or this level is safe.

Minister, will you give a guarantee — because that's what people are looking for — that these tenants who depend on stable housing costs won't see —

**The Speaker:** Thank you. Minister?

*Interjection.*

**The Speaker:** Member for Fort York, question time is over.

**Hon Mr Leach:** To the member of the third party, we know that what actions we take resulting from the negotiations with the federal government and through the negotiations with the municipal government will end up with a process and a system that is much better than what's there now.

The members opposite in both parties obviously aren't aware that the major social housing providers in the municipalities approached the provincial government and asked if they could take control of the administration and management of social housing in their communities. Certainly Peel Living, in Peel, approached this government on several occasions. As a matter of fact, they approached the previous government and said they felt municipalities were best equipped to provide the delivery of social housing. Ottawa, for example, did the same thing. The Catholic diocese, which provides a lot of social housing, also said they felt that they were in a better position to deliver and manage social housing.

#### ALTERNATIVE DISPUTE RESOLUTION

**Mr John R. Baird (Nepean):** My question is to the Attorney General. For many years, people in my community have watched our civil justice system become more and more inaccessible. More and more ordinary citizens and small businesses are coming to the conclusion that our civil courts are out of reach. Could the minister inform the House what he and his ministry are doing to address the problems in the civil courts so that they are more accessible to people who need to resolve disputes privately?

**Hon Charles Harnick (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs):** I recently announced that we would be making mandatory mediation a part of the civil justice system in Ontario, thus giving parties an opportunity at an early stage to go to a mediation and attempt to have their cases settled quickly. We have run a pilot project in Toronto and we have found that 40% of all the cases sent there after the delivery of a statement of defence were able to be settled, thus saving an awful lot of money for the litigants, who would have their cases solved and settled at an early stage before they incurred significant legal costs.

This is a very significant change to the direction that civil justice has taken. It's pursuant to a recommendation in the Civil Justice Review, which was set up by the former Attorney General and the Chief Justice of Ontario,



and I believe it will have a very positive effect in saving litigants a lot of money.

**Mr Baird:** There have been concerns raised among some people in my community about the appointment of mediators and some criticism that the mediation could be questionable, given that it's unregulated since the service will be provided privately. Could the minister tell me how he and his ministry will work to ensure that these services will be provided in an appropriate fashion in the province?

**Hon Mr Harnick:** Local alternative dispute resolution committees will exist in each region around the province. Those committees will set qualifications to ensure that a roster can be struck and that we can have qualified mediators available to do all of the cases that will be necessary.

Those committees will also ensure that mediations are taking place properly. They will also deal with any complaints and they will also set even standards around the province. The important thing is to have qualified mediators available around the province so that we can let all Ontarians avail themselves of an opportunity to settle their cases early.

1430

#### HARASSMENT AND DISCRIMINATION POLICIES

**Mr David Ramsay (Timiskaming):** I have a question for the Solicitor General. As the Solicitor General knows, the top two officials at the Windsor Jail, the superintendent and the manager of operations, have been suspended for over a month now with pay. It is understood that there are investigations ongoing under the workplace harassment and discrimination prevention policy. As the minister knows, the Windsor Jail unfortunately has an infamous reputation after a high-profile discrimination case involving a female employee in 1995. At that time, the Crown Employees Grievance Settlement Board painted a picture of a workplace totally out of control, and the minister knew that at the time. When are you going to take charge of your workplace and ensure that all employees working for the crown under your charge are treated in a proper and fair manner?

**Hon Robert W. Runciman (Solicitor General and Minister of Correctional Services):** I think if the member opposite wanted to be fair, he would acknowledge that the previous concerns related to Windsor Jail did not happen during the term of this government. Certainly we're moving in very significant areas to correct systemic problems within corrections which have been there for many, many years.

We have introduced a new training program, the CO-Start program, so that we're very carefully scrutinizing the kinds of individuals who are coming into the system as correctional officers. We had Norman Inkster, the former head of the RCMP, conduct a review of the corrections ministry and we are following his advice and his suggestions with respect to changes. We recently issued a request for proposals and we're conducting a review of the culture within the Ontario corrections system.

We recognize the problems. They've been there for some time and we're making changes in a wide range of areas.

**Mr Ramsay:** When you took charge of correctional services, as you said, you did recognize the problem and you've had almost two years now to deal with those problems. You said that the original Windsor incident wasn't under your watch, but I have news clippings here of August 1996 about jail guards and sex probes involving two different facilities here in Toronto; sex offenders at staff parties at another institution in this city. This has been going on for a long, long time and you were the guy who said you were going to come in and clean this up. To date we still haven't seen it and now we've got two top officials at the Windsor Jail suspended under suspicion for similar sorts of behaviour.

This is under your watch. We in the opposition are asking you to clean up the act over there so that all employees know when they go to work in the morning that they're entering a workplace that is safe and free of discrimination.

**Hon Mr Runciman:** We are making the most significant changes in the history of the corrections system. That particular member was the minister of corrections for a period of time and certainly he was faced with challenges and difficulties as well, as were the NDP members opposite during their tenure in office. Those changes did not take place, certainly not in the significant terms that we're proposing with respect to the culture, with respect to the new infrastructure programs, with respect to the new training and hiring programs that we've instituted, and in terms of the recommendations put forward by Norman Inkster in terms of management accountability, reporting mechanisms, the whole range of suggestions which we are moving on as rapidly as we can.

As I've indicated, the corrections system is a pretty big ship. It cannot be turned around overnight, but we're moving as expeditiously and as safely as we possibly can.

#### ONTARIO LOTTERY CORP

**Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie):** My question is for the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism. Given the very disturbing history of influence peddling and criminal activity in jurisdictions in North America where the private sector delivers lottery products, have you any concerns as you poise to privatize all or parts of the Ontario Lottery Corp?

**Hon William Saunderson (Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism):** I'm happy to respond. I would like to let the member know that I intend to visit Sault Ste Marie next week to have a meeting with the board of the Ontario Lottery Corp, and while I am there I'll be speaking with the mayor of Sault Ste Marie as well.

I don't believe there is a history in Canada of any wrongdoing on the part of running casinos or other betting establishment and I don't quite understand the member's concern as far as the wrongdoing is concerned. But I'm happy to assure him that when I visit Sault Ste Marie next week I will have a very thorough discussion about the Ontario Lottery Corp.



The very fact that we are having a review of the lottery corporation is very good for the taxpayers in this province. Only last year we found that there was a possible saving of \$36 million. I think the taxpayers appreciate that.

**Mr Martin:** It's interesting; there is no history of privatizing lotteries in Canada. In view of the very disturbing report that your government has some ownership of called Gambling in Ontario: Current Enforcement Concerns, 1995, and the fact that analyses show that illegal gambling flourishes in Ontario and there is potential for abuse even in the legal gaming sector; and given the fact that one of the things the Ontario Lottery Corp prides itself in is its integrity, the fact that when you buy a ticket from the Ontario Lottery Corp you know there is no scam going on and we are confident as a government that it will turn over to us for use in health care, education, social services and all the things that we find useful, millions of dollars every year; in light of the very disturbing analysis that was done by this report and in light of the history across North America of the private sector and criminal activity —

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Question.

**Mr Martin:** — in lottery activity, will you today commit to this House that you will not privatize any part of the Ontario Lottery Corp?

**Hon Mr Saunderson:** In response to the supplementary question, I'd like to point out that at the present time — and the member refers to illegal gambling going on in the country and maybe in this province — that there are some 20,000 or more illegal VLTs in operation in Ontario.

**Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma):** That's not the question that was asked.

**Hon Mr Saunderson:** I'm very happy that by doing what we are doing as far as VLTs are concerned, they will be properly looked after and scrutinized by our government and our agencies. The private sector has done an excellent job in running the casinos in Ontario. There are three casinos now in operation — in Windsor, in Rama township and in Niagara Falls — and the private sector is doing a very good job in running those casinos.

I once again come back to the member's question about privatization of aspects of the Ontario Lottery Corp. All I can say to the member is that what we are trying to do is get the best possible —

**The Speaker:** Thank you, Minister.

*Interjection.*

**The Speaker:** Minister, thank you very much. New question.

#### YOUNG OFFENDERS

**Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland):** My question is directed to the Solicitor General. Since the announcement of the strict discipline facility I have received a number of calls from my riding in Northumberland. Many are worried that the Ontario facilities may resemble some of those that we hear about in the United States. They believe the Brookside facility in Cobourg already meets the strict discipline standards that you are suggesting.

Could you please explain to my riding how these two programs will differ?

**Hon Robert W. Runciman (Solicitor General and Minister of Correctional Services):** I want to thank the member for the question. The strict discipline camp to be instituted in Ontario will be quite dramatically different in approach from the perceived boot camps in the United States. We're not looking at the shout-in-your-face, demeaning kind of approach, but I want to say that this is not going to be any cakewalk. This is going to be a very structured 16-hour day. It's going to stress work programs, life skills, problem-solving.

There will be initially 32 to 50 young offenders. They're going to be selected based on their previous history as high-risk, repeat offenders, and that in effect differs from the Brookside approach. There will be uniforms; there will be standardized haircuts; privileges will be earned.

As an important part of this there will be a community component. Once these offenders leave the facility, they will have up to a 12-month period to be reintegrated into the community. Those supports will be there to ensure that they can become citizens and make a contribution.

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Thank you.  
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**Mr Galt:** Minister, that's certainly encouraging to hear. There's also concern in my riding that relates to the effectiveness of strict discipline facilities in reforming young offenders. Can you tell me what evidence you have that the government's approach will in fact be effective?

**Hon Mr Runciman:** I want to stress that this is a pilot program. What we do know is that the current approaches aren't working. About 64% of the offenders in the youth system are repeat offenders, and almost 80% of the folks in our adult system are graduates, if you will, or have had some experience in the youth justice system, so clearly what we're doing is not working.

We're going to monitor this pilot very closely. We'll have a request for proposals very shortly to provide the monitoring on a six-month interval basis.

The reality is, people across this province and across this country really are upset, concerned with youth crime. The federal government has refused to move, in terms of the Young Offenders Act, in a meaningful way to address those concerns. We at the provincial level are limited in what we can do, but we recognize those concerns and we are trying to do something about it.

#### VICTIMS OF CRIME

**Ms Annamarie Castrilli (Downsview):** My question is to the Attorney General. The Attorney General on June 10 made this statement in the House:

"This government will not accept a system that allows victims of crime to suffer twice, first at the hands of the criminal and second at the hands of a justice system that does not respond to and respect victims' needs. Victims have told us that they feel alienated by the justice system. They are intimidated by the system and made to feel that their needs are secondary to the rights of the accused."



This is exactly what Karen Vanscoy feels. Mrs Vanscoy lost her 14-year-old daughter, who was shot to death, and subsequently a plea bargain was entered for manslaughter rather than second-degree murder. She feels she was inadequately informed and she feels quite frustrated at the system as it now stands.

I know the Attorney General would agree with me that victims' rights legislation is intended to give real rights to victims and not just rhetoric. I think on this the House can be agreed.

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** And your question?

**Ms Castrilli:** How does the Attorney General respond to Mrs Vanscoy and will he agree to meet with her as she has requested?

**Hon Charles Harnick (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs):** I certainly would like to express my sympathy for the Vanscoy family and express the fact that we are always interested in improving services to victims. I'm aware that senior officials have offered to meet with the family and their counsel to discuss the Victims' Bill of Rights. In this case, I want to inform the Legislature that extraordinary steps were taken to inform the family at all stages and to respond to their concerns. A great deal of time was spent with Mrs Vanscoy.

Our government brought meaningful change to the way victims are treated in the justice system and we will continue to look for ways to improve services for victims.

**Ms Castrilli:** What Mrs Vanscoy wants is a meeting with the minister, but she also wants very clear guidelines with respect to plea bargaining.

I'll remind members in this House that I've raised this issue a number of times before. On March 19 of last year, the Attorney General said to us that there is a need for rules in plea bargaining cases, that people at the ministry have indicated already a willingness and a desire to begin the process of setting out clearly answers to plea bargaining. On June 6, the minister responded to a question from me, "The senior members in the criminal law division are working on this project and I expect they'll have guidelines prepared and dealt with." That was almost a year ago. We have yet to see any guidelines.

I want to ask the minister again, will he now develop guidelines and is he prepared to release them? What can victims of crime expect from this government?

**Hon Mr Harnick:** What victims of crime have seen is that we've done more for victims than the last two governments combined. We passed the Victims' Bill of Rights; we've doubled the number of victim/witness assistance programs in the province, spending an additional \$2.7 million doing that; we've quadrupled the number of victim crisis and assistance referral service sites, spending \$4.5 million by the end of 1997-98 doing that; we've established the victim notification system to inform victims of the status of the offender; we've provided \$500,000 so local groups can provide services to victims in their communities; we've set up two domestic violence courts to find better ways to prosecute spousal abusers; and we've enshrined the victims' justice fund to guarantee that money collected under the victims' fine surcharge will be solely dedicated to services for victims.

We're prepared to look at the suggestions the member has made. We are continuing to have those discussions and we will do that.

## PROTECTION OF TEMAGAMI

**Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma):** I have a question to the Minister of Natural Resources. The minister will know that Friday was the deadline for submissions requesting an individual environmental assessment on the Cross Lake road access. He will also know that while the ministry is just now developing the environmental assessment for that road access in the Temagami area, the West Nipissing group has already built the road. Isn't this a classic case of putting the cart before the horse? Why are you having an environmental assessment after the road's already been built?

**Hon Chris Hodgson (Minister of Natural Resources, Northern Development and Mines):** That's true; the road has been built. It was a mistake by MNR last fall and we are going through the legal procedure to make sure that all parties are notified. If there's any damage that's occurred, we'll remedy that damage.

But let me be clear that when the comprehensive planning council made its recommendations it recommended that there be an access but that the people would have to walk about 500 yards down to the water. That just discriminated against old people and disabled people and we did not accept those recommendations. I suggested there be an access that people could drive to and then park their cars back from the lake from there.

**Mr Wildman:** That doesn't explain why you didn't have an EA in advance.

The minister has indicated that he violated the recommendation of the comprehensive planning council in this particular case, but that's not all he violated. This is in the same area that the minister said he would set aside for possible land claims settlement, and the minister made a commitment on behalf of the government that no developments would take place in this area without consultation with the Teme-Augama Anishnabai and the Temagami First Nation. How is it that neither chief was notified of this road prior to its being approved by the ministry? How is it that you violated your own commitment to keep this land set aside, pending a land claims settlement?

**Hon Mr Hodgson:** I disagree with the premise. I met with the first nations back in June when I accepted, for the most part, all of the comprehensive planning council's recommendations. At that time it was my contention to set those lands aside for future economic development opportunities for the two first nations of the Temagami area.

The road was a separate issue. That was part of the CPC's recommendations. I accepted it and I went through that with the first nations at the time. MNR staff are meeting with representatives of the two first nations and we'll try to resolve this misunderstanding. As far as the EA for the road goes, it's a minor process and we're following all the legal aspects to that now.



## CHILD POVERTY

**Mr John O'Toole (Durham East):** My question is to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs. My riding of Durham East and indeed all ridings in Ontario are concerned about the future of the community action program for children, CAPC. CAPC is a community-based program that provides single mothers with advice on prenatal nutrition and on parenting, thereby helping to break the cycle of poverty. Minister, was CAPC part of your federal-provincial discussions that took place in January with the council on social policy renewal?

**Hon Dianne Cunningham (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, minister responsible for women's issues):** In response to the question from the member for Durham East, at our last meetings in Toronto both my colleague Minister Ecker, at the meetings of the social services ministers, and myself, at the council, pressured the federal government to maintain funding to the CAPC program. Hopefully we will be successful. We'll find out I guess tomorrow. Certainly all of us have stated that programs that help young mothers with children, as some of the programs we've started here in Ontario — we must be looking towards lasting benefits as we negotiate with Ottawa so that the public of Ontario, with programs run by their communities, can be successful.

1450

**Mr O'Toole:** Are you hopeful that the federal government will announce tomorrow in its budget deliberations cooperation with the other provinces to address child poverty? And, Minister, have you had discussions with your partners across Canada and the council on social policy renewal?

**Hon Mrs Cunningham:** Again, in response to the member's question, I think everyone in this House would be interested to know that the whole issue of a national child benefit actually began with the premiers in August 1995 at a meeting of first ministers in St John's, Newfoundland. They've evolved over a period of time through the interprovincial and through the fed-prov negotiations. Hopefully we'll see something tomorrow.

I would say that my colleague, Minister Ecker, herself has been working hard with her counterparts, the ministers of community and social services across the country. I think it was to everyone's great pride that we moved forward last June with the Prime Minister to include the federal government as part of our discussions.

So as far as a national child benefit is concerned —

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** New question; member for Fort William.

## EDUCATION FINANCING

**Mrs Lyn McLeod (Fort William):** My question is for the Minister of Education. The minister is aware that we have begun hearings on Bill 104 and that there have been a great number of parents who have been expressing concern about the minister's intent to take over all education funding. Their concerns are with whether or not the Ministry of Education is going to appropriately address the needs of their particular school.

We have some evidence that the Minister of Education is not able to get it right with one of those schools that

he is currently providing funds for, and I raise with him again today the issue of St Patrick's school, a small high school in Atikokan, part of an isolate board. Because it is part of an isolate board, your ministry provides it not only with its funding but with its staffing guidelines. It cannot staff beyond what you allow.

St Patrick's school currently has one and a half fewer teachers than it should have because of apparent confusion within your ministry. It might not sound like a big deal, but in a small school that means the grade 6 students have only a half-time teacher.

This issue has been raised in the Legislature; it's been the subject of numerous letters and calls to the ministry. I have yet again a letter from the minister saying, "It is not my problem, it is the board's responsibility." My question, Minister, is, what do we have to do to make you understand that this one is your responsibility? You provide the dollars, you made the cut, and you are depriving these students of their teacher.

**Hon John Snobelen (Minister of Education and Training):** I would very much enjoy reading the letter that you're obviously going to send me today. If there is something that's within the responsibility of the ministry, we'll certainly take it on.

I do take the point, though, that the funding models we currently have in Ontario don't meet the needs of students. I do accept that. I do accept the fact that the general legislative branch and the way we fund isolate school boards are not the best ways to provide funding. That's why this government has finally taken on the responsibility for making sure that the funding for every child in Ontario is met, the needs are met for a high quality of education.

If there is an instance where we can be of some assistance now, I'd be more than happy to look at it, but I don't understand how one day the member opposite can rise and take objection to the province taking a senior responsibility and the next day suggest that's not a good idea.

**Mrs McLeod:** On a point of privilege, Mr Speaker: In reference to the minister's suggestion that I provide him with a copy of the letter so he'll be aware of the incident, the letter I'm referring to is a letter from the minister to me once again saying he's not responsible for this decision.

## NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

**Ms Annamarie Castrilli (Downsview):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Pursuant to standing order 34(a), I have filed with the table officer my dissatisfaction with the Attorney General's response and request a late show.

## PETITIONS

### INTERGENERATIONAL COMMUNITY PROJECT

**Mr Gilles E. Morin (Carleton East):** My petition is addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the PACE 2000 Foundation, a non-profit organization, is planning to build a residential community



for seniors and mature students on the undeveloped lands directly north of Montfort hospital;

"Whereas the objectives of the PACE 2000 Foundation are to help seniors live longer in their homes and to help students acquire professional expertise and social support, and that it will be achieved with the support of the inter-generational network which promotes the interaction between seniors and students in a complementary approach;

"Whereas les Filles de la sagesse, l'Hôpital Montfort and the PACE 2000 Foundation have submitted a joint application for the rezoning of this 21-acre site, from the actual institutional P to residential R5, on January 26, 1996, and whereas as by January 28, 1997, the rezoning has still not been granted by the city of Ottawa;

"Whereas since May 1996, 510 signatories are asking that the PACE 2000 project be implemented as soon as possible on these lands;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To grant highest priority to the municipal and provincial agreements which are required for the development of the PACE 2000 intergenerational community project on the lands directly north of Montfort Hospital before the implementation of the city's new zoning bylaws."

I affix my signature.

#### RENT REGULATION

**Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre):** I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It reads as follows:

"Whereas Mike Harris's Conservative government of Ontario is planning to destroy the present system of rent control;

"Whereas Mike Harris and the Conservative Party made no mention of scrapping rent control during the election campaign of 1995 or in the Common Sense Revolution document;

"Whereas a number of Conservative candidates in ridings with high tenant populations campaigned during the 1995 election on a platform of protecting the current rent control system;

"Whereas the government has consulted with special interest groups representing landlords and developers while cutting funding to organizations representing the 3.5 million tenants of Ontario;

"Whereas although all renters will suffer, seniors and others on fixed incomes will suffer particular hardship if rent controls are abolished; and

"Whereas eliminating rent control will result in skyrocketing rents in Ontario,

"Therefore we, the undersigned, call upon Premier Mike Harris, Housing Minister Al Leach and members of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to stop the attack on the 3.5 million tenants of this province."

I add my name to theirs in support.

#### MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

**Mr Dan Newman (Scarborough Centre):** I have a petition that reads as follows.

"A petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the city of Scarborough is requiring individuals who want to participate in the mail-in referendum to provide their name, address and signature on the ballot; and

"Whereas this requirement is blatantly undemocratic and threatens the legitimacy of the democratic process; and

"Whereas the city of Scarborough makes no mention as to whether or not it will accept ballots from residents who wish to vote in confidence; and

"Whereas the question on the ballot itself is slanted towards the position of the city and cannot be viewed as a neutral question; and

"Whereas this uncertainty and undemocratic procedure makes the entire process a great misuse of taxpayers' dollars and tarnishes any results that will come out of the vote;

"Therefore be it resolved that we, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario to (1) speak out against this undemocratic vote, (2) disregard the results of the vote, and (3) continue the proposed unification of the municipalities into one unified city of Toronto."

#### NORTH YORK BRANSON HOSPITAL

**Mr Monte Kwinter (Wilson Heights):** I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the final report of the Metropolitan Toronto District Health Council hospital restructuring committee has recommended that North York Branson Hospital merge with York-Finch hospital;

"Whereas this recommendation will remove emergency and inpatient services currently provided by North York Branson Hospital, which will seriously jeopardize medical care and the quality of health for the growing population which the hospital serves, many being elderly people who in numerous cases require treatment for life-threatening medical conditions;

"We petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reject the recommendation contained within the final report of the Metropolitan Toronto District Health Council hospital restructuring committee as it pertains to North York Branson Hospital, so that it retains, at minimum, emergency and inpatient services."

I have affixed my signature.

#### WORKERS' COMPENSATION

**Ms Shelley Martel (Sudbury East):** I have a petition which reads as follows.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Mike Harris government is attacking workers' compensation benefits and the rights of injured workers;

"Whereas Tory plans include taking \$15 billion from injured workers and giving \$6 billion to employers, including the government's rich corporate friends;

"Whereas Cam Jackson, the former Minister without Portfolio with responsibility for gutting the WCB, refused to hold public hearings, choosing to meet secretly with business and insurance industry representatives;

"Whereas the WCB has about \$7.6 billion in assets and its unfunded liability has been steadily shrinking;



"Whereas the Jackson report and WCB legislation are just part of a coordinated attack on occupational health and safety protections for working families in Ontario;

"Whereas Tory plans also include abolition of the internationally respected Occupational Disease Panel;

"Whereas the government needs to hear the message that taking money from injured workers and lowering incentives for employers to make workplaces safer is not the way to make Ontario a better place to live;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to hold full, province-wide public hearings on WCB reform; to listen to the voice of the people calling for improved occupational health and safety protection; and to tell the Tory government to call off its attack on the dignity and standard of living of injured workers and their families."

This has been signed by 53 residents in the riding of Sudbury East. I agree with the petitioners and I have signed my name as well.

1500

### SCHOOL BOARDS

**Mr Tom Froese (St Catharines-Brock):** I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and it reads:

"Whereas the provincial government is planning to make significant changes to the delivery and governance of education in this province; and

"Whereas we, as parents, believe that school councils should play an important role in education, with clearly defined responsibilities limited to their particular school communities; and

"Whereas we, as ratepayers, are extremely disturbed that consideration is being given to abolish school boards and eliminate decision-making by locally elected representatives;

We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario that the present structure of school boards within the province of Ontario continue to have a major role in governance of the schools to deal with broad policies as advocates for the students in their community, to provide cost-efficient educational services and to be directly accountable to the parents and local ratepayers."

It's signed by a constituent in my riding.

### FIRE SAFETY

**Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury):** This is a petition in response to Bill 84, and it's to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the firefighters of Sudbury and Ontario are very concerned about Bill 84;

"Whereas we feel Bill 84 is unfair;

"Whereas we feel Bill 84 is discriminatory;

"Whereas we feel Bill 84 endangers the wellbeing of the people of Ontario;

"Whereas we feel Bill 84 requires extensive changes;

"Whereas we feel Bill 84 needs broad provincial public hearings before implementation; and

"Whereas we feel Bill 84 can cause major concern to the property taxpayers of Ontario and we don't want to get burned by Bill 84;

"We, the undersigned, therefore petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to demand the Solicitor General to rewrite Bill 84 before being enacted into law and only after extensive public hearings across Ontario."

Of course, I affix my signature to this petition.

### OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

**Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre):** I have a petition forwarded to me by Gord Wilson, president of the Ontario Federation of Labour, on behalf of all working people in this province. It reads as follows:

"Whereas the Harris government has begun a process to open the Occupational Health and Safety Act of Ontario; and

"Whereas this act is the single most important piece of legislation for working people since it is designed to protect our lives, safety and health while at work and allow us to return home to our families in the same condition in which we left; and

"Whereas the government has made it clear that they intend to water down the act and weaken the rights of workers under the law, including the right to know, the right to participate and especially the right to refuse unsafe work; and

"Whereas this government has already watered down proper training of certified committee members;

"Therefore, we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario not to alter the Occupational Health and Safety Act or erode the rights of workers any further and ensure strict enforcement of the legislation."

In support, I add my name to theirs.

### ROUTE 17

**M. Jean-Marc Lalonde (Prescott et Russell):** J'ai une pétition à l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario.

«Attendu que des accidents surviennent sur une base régulière et qu'un rapport de la PPO de Rockland démontre que 23 accidents sérieux sont survenus au cours des huit derniers mois sur la route 17 entre Rockland et Orléans ;

Attendu qu'une étude démontre que pas moins de 18 000 autos circulent chaque jour sur cette portion de 20 kilomètres de la route 17 ;

Attendu que la conception d'ébauches est complétée, des audiences publiques ont eu lieu et des parcelles de terrain ont été achetées ;

Nous, soussignés, adressons à l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario la pétition suivante :

Nous demandons au ministre des Transports, Al Palladini, de remettre sur la liste des priorités le projet d'élargissement de la route 17 entre le chemin Trim et Clarence Point et nous demandons au gouvernement de mettre de côté les fonds nécessaires pour l'exécution de ce projet avant de remettre aux municipalités la responsabilité de la route 17.»

J'y ajoute ma signature.

### EDUCATION FINANCING

**Ms Shelley Martel (Sudbury East):** I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly and it reads as follows:



"Whereas Mike Harris and John Snobelen promised no cuts to classroom education, and since their election the Harris government has cut more than \$430 million from school board budgets, representing a cut of nearly \$1 billion to public education on an annualized basis; and

"Whereas our children have already lost 50% of their special education funding; they've lost their librarians and in some areas their junior kindergartens; many of them have no music programs left in their schools; their class sizes have increased enormously; some are in danger of losing their buses; and

"Whereas parents across Ontario know that most of the changes in education are being made just to cut \$1 billion that the government needs to fund its tax cut; and

"Whereas parents know these cuts are affecting the classrooms and the quality of education for their children; and

"Whereas parents know that they have not been consulted;

"We, the undersigned, demand that Mike Harris stop these cuts to our children's education and their future."

This has been signed by 47 residents in the riding of Sudbury East. I agree with it and I have signed as well.

#### FIRE SAFETY

**Mr David Ramsay (Timiskaming):** "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Firefighters need speed, experience and teamwork to save lives. I oppose any legislation that could undermine the work of my local firefighters and jeopardize fire safety in my community. Please listen to professional firefighters and amend Bill 84 to eliminate the threat to fire safety."

I will affix my signature to this petition.

#### ADULT EDUCATION

**Mr Alvin Curling (Scarborough North):** I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Education Act of Ontario and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms guarantee equal access to secondary school education for all students regardless of age;

"Whereas Bill 34 clearly discriminates against students over the age of 20;

"Whereas factors in Metropolitan Toronto such as years of major economic dislocation, escalating social problems and consistently high levels of immigration have created tremendous need and demand for quality, effective adult education programs;

"Whereas public adult education programs in Metro Toronto are a proven success with 83% of students moving directly into employment or further education after completing short-term programs of five months or one year;

"Whereas Bill 34 clearly threatens these programs;

"We, the undersigned, urge the provincial assembly to instruct the government to withdraw Bill 34, the Education Amendment Act, because it discriminates against adult students on the basis of age."

I affix my signature to this petition.

#### TVONTARIO

**Mr David Ramsay (Timiskaming):** "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas TVOntario has been providing Ontarians of all ages with high-quality educational programs and services delivered through television and other media for 25 years;

"Whereas TVOntario provides universal access to educational broadcasting in the most effective way possible;

"Whereas TVOntario provides essential broadcast services to communities in northern Ontario;

"Whereas TVOntario has an extensive community-based advisory network spanning the province;

"Whereas TVOntario is committed to increasing net self-generated revenues by 15% every year;

"Therefore, we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To formally commit to the province's continued support of TVOntario as a publicly owned educational network."

I will affix my signature.

#### HOTEL DIEU HOSPITAL

**Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines):** I have a petition that reads as follows:

"To the government of Ontario:

"Since the Hotel Dieu Hospital has played and continues to play a vital role in the delivery of health care services in St Catharines and the Niagara region;

"Since Hotel Dieu has modified its role over the years as part of a rationalization of medical services in St Catharines and has assumed the position of a regional health care facility in such areas as kidney dialysis and oncology;

"Since the Niagara region is experiencing underfunding in the health care field and requires more medical services and not fewer services;

"Since Niagara residents are required at present to travel outside of the Niagara region to receive many specialized services that could be provided in city hospitals and thereby not require local patients to make difficult and inconvenient trips down our highways to other centres;

"Since the Niagara hospital restructuring committee used a Toronto consulting firm to develop its recommendations and was forced to take into account a cut of \$44 million in funding for Niagara hospitals when carrying out its study;

"Since the population of the Niagara region is older than that in most areas of the province and more elderly people tend to require more hospital services;

"We, the undersigned, request that the government of Ontario keep the election commitment of Premier Mike Harris not to close hospitals in our province, and we call upon the Premier to reject any recommendation to close Hotel Dieu Hospital in St Catharines."

I affix my signature to this petition as I'm in full agreement with its contents.



1510

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

FAIR MUNICIPAL FINANCE ACT, 1997  
LOI DE 1997 SUR LE FINANCEMENT  
ÉQUITABLE DES MUNICIPALITÉS

Resuming the adjourned debate on the motion for second reading of Bill 106, An Act respecting the financing of local government / Projet de loi 106, Loi concernant le financement des administrations locales.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson):** The Chair recognizes the member for York Mills.

**Mr David Turnbull (York Mills):** When I was last debating this issue, I had pointed out in some detail that the history of assessment in this province is that we have a patchwork quilt, with some very recent assessments in some municipalities and in other municipalities, such as Metropolitan Toronto, very, very old assessments which reach back into the 1950s based upon a 1940s assessment year.

I had mentioned the fact that I have always been against the concept of a value-based assessment. I appear to have lost that argument. I have lost that argument within my own caucus. Indeed, I've noticed that both the NDP and the Liberals have in the past been ready to pass market value assessment.

The proposed assessment scheme that we have brought forward is not a market value assessment, but is somewhat closely related to it and is known as actual value assessment. The principal differences between the assessment scheme that we're bringing forward and the scheme which the NDP was ready to bless with some slight amendments and indeed the scheme which the Liberals had embraced are significant.

The Liberals wanted to have a 1988 assessment year. We are coming forward with an assessment year of 1996, which is the most stable year in modern history in terms of —

**Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin):** You're incredible. It should have been back in 1989.

**Mr Turnbull:** I hear the chortles from my friend the member for Algoma-Manitoulin. Obviously my friend has not followed values of properties, because 1988 was the most unstable property assessment value year this century, probably in history, in Canada. That, sir, was the assessment year your government was committed to introduce. Let's be very clear about this.

**Mr Michael Brown:** But we didn't do it.

**Mr Turnbull:** My friend says they didn't do it. The history was this: They had committed to introducing it on 1988 assessment. The assessment was just coming in at the time that you lost the election. You had committed that you were bringing it in on 1988 assessment. Don't try and wriggle out of it; you're papered every way to Sunday.

This system is based on 1996 assessment, which is the most stable year. We had relatively high sales last year and yet prices of properties did not go up. As a matter of fact, they went slightly down and the differential between

the top and the bottom end of the market was smaller than it has been in the last few years.

Apart from a stable year, we are not implementing the system that was proposed by the two previous governments, which would have been based upon highest and best use as the basis of assessment. We are assessing on the basis of the present use.

The significance of this, as an example, would be that if somebody had a small house which was on a piece of land where they could knock it down and build a high-rise apartment building, under highest and best use the owner of that house would be taxed, even though they were using it as a residential house, as if they were going to build a high-rise building on the value of that land for building, which would have been highly unfair to the person and would have ended in forcing that person out of the house. This is not what we're doing. We're using the present use.

Another significant change over the previous system that was proposed is that it will be on the basis of a three-year rolling average, so if you do indeed in some future year have some spike in values, there will be a levelling out of that spike. As well as that, our government has brought in legislation which allows municipalities up to eight years to mitigate the introduction where you get increases or decreases in the assessment. This will have the impact of allowing municipalities to ensure that there is not any serious disruption to people on fixed incomes.

In a separate piece of legislation which our government intends to introduce in the springtime, we will be bringing forward legislation that will allow for the separate assessment of utility rights of way. One of the problems that the NDP correctly identified with the legislation they were going to bring in with respect to the municipality of Metropolitan Toronto was that under the old system, where you taxed utility rights of way at the average of the adjacent property values, it would have significantly increased the burden on those utility rights of way, which is highly unfair, because utilities typically have a very small consumption or zero consumption of services from the municipality.

Of course, I always point to the example of the derailment that occurred in Mississauga some years ago. After the derailment, the municipality sent bills to the railway company with respect to provision of police and fire services during that time, and yet all of the years they had been paying that in the assessment, which seems to be double taxation, as far as I can see. We will be addressing that.

The experience of a system in British Columbia which has been in existence for some number of years, very closely related to the system that we are bringing forward, is that after the initial year of appeals things settled down to a very small number of appeals in any year. A significant step forward that our government intends to make is that the information relevant to an appeal will be freely available to those people wishing to appeal their property values.

One of the requests that has been made by the opposition is, "Give us the impact studies for this." It seems the Liberals have forgotten that the impact study they pro-



duced was the 1988 assessment, pure and simple. When the NDP released the information on the 1988 assessment as they were about to implement it, they claimed that was an impact study; in fact, it was the numbers directly relating to the assessment. The assessment is ongoing at this moment.

I see you're nodding your head. You have some pearls of wisdom to cast before us. I cannot wait for the question-and-answer period for you to put the question, because these are purely the facts of the matter. The assessment is the impact study.

Of course, I'm somewhat perplexed when the NDP says, "Oh, you're wrong with your numbers," and old spot-on Floyd, who never managed to meet a target in all of his years as Treasurer of this province — it is perplexing, you will permit me, Mr Speaker, to say, when we have somebody who has never been able to balance the books make a statement like that.

1520

**Hon Marilyn Mushinski (Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation):** Especially when you have two sets of books, right?

**Mr Turnbull:** Yes, indeed, the NDP added a new wrinkle: They had two sets of books.

My friends in the opposition, the NDP, increased taxes 33 times while they were in power. Eleven of them were income tax changes. There was a \$4-billion increase in taxation in the time the NDP was in power. The Liberals almost met that target; they had 32 tax increases in their few years in power. You know, 65 tax increases account for why this province is in the economic woes that it's in.

**Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I know that this member traditionally always wishes people to stick to the topic. I believe that what he's talking about right now has got absolutely nothing to do with the fair market assessment system that we're talking about in this bill. I wonder if you could advise him to get back to the issues as raised in the bill.

**The Acting Speaker:** That is a point of order. I've been listening very attentively to the speaker and I thought he was very close to the subject of Bill 106. You may continue.

**Mr Turnbull:** I must say, a very good ruling, Mr Speaker. The fact is we're talking about taxes and we're talking about the fact that there is only one taxpayer. Clearly those people, myself included, who have fought over the years to resist a value-based assessment are disappointed that this is the basis of what we're doing. However, this is infinitely fairer than anything that the NDP or the Liberals ever touched.

I have enumerated it: The fact is that it is on the most stable year; the differentials are the lowest; we have a three-year rolling average; it's on the present use, not the highest and best use; we are going to move on utility rights of way; and most significantly, we are going to make available all of the facts and figures to allow the people who have any difficulties to appeal their assessment when it comes in. That is a fair system.

It may not be the system that the people I have often talked to over the years would like. I would urge all parties — the Liberals, the NDP and the Conserva-

tives — to have another look at the idea of moving away from a value-based system. The fact is that in the Fair Tax Commission report — I'd just like to read this into the record:

"Assessment: The system is not a system. The property assessment system in Ontario is a system in name only. In theory, Ontario has a single standard — market value — for assessment. In practice, the same types of property are assessed differently at dramatically different proportions of their market value in different parts of Ontario. For example, in a sample of 31 larger municipalities selected for study by the working group, the assessment of single-family residential property in Ontario ranged from a low of 1.5% of estimated 1990 market value in Toronto to a high of 41.5% of estimated 1990 value in Barrie."

Clearly, there is a problem. We have seen that with respect to all transfers from the provincial government to municipalities, because you don't have an even benchmark. That is the reason we need to have a single year of assessment for the whole of the province. If that is done, I believe those municipalities that have a legitimate problem will be able to prove it much more adequately than with the present patchwork.

I believe we are fulfilling our election mandate to make sure that taxes are fair and to reduce taxes. There will be some people who individually will be negatively impacted by this, but municipalities will have the ability to mitigate up to eight years, which is far and beyond anything that the Liberals or NDP ever contemplated, and that is enshrined right in the legislation.

With that, giving the little bit of historical background to it, I look forward to any questions from across the floor and I will be happy to remind them of their record.

**The Acting Speaker:** Questions or comments?

**Mr Gerretsen:** First of all, I'd like to just comment on the member's last statement, that if it is truly a fair system, and as fair as he indicated in his 25-minute dissertation, it begs the question as to why it should take eight years to be implemented then, because I'm sure a good argument could be made that if it's really a fair system, you should implement it immediately.

There's one other thing I'd like to say, and that is that the assessment system itself is being totally changed. There has been very little attention paid to this, but I think the people of Ontario should clearly understand that the assessment function which is being carried on currently by the provincial government, and has been so since about 1970-71, will now be taken over by the municipalities. I personally have some great concern with that.

One must remember the reason it was taken over by the province in the first place. It was in order to bring in some standards of consistency throughout the province to make sure that the assessment function at the local level was not highly politicized. One can well see a situation where, for example, a particular councillor may take issue with the assessment that has been placed on a property by somebody who is in effect employed by that council, and one can just surmise all sorts of political difficulties that may come as a result of that. I'm not saying that most people aren't going to be honest in the system, but the chance of the system being highly politicized and there



being possible skulduggery with respect to the system is much more likely if it's carried out at the local level.

There was always a certain safety net in making sure that the mill rate wasn't set by the same organization that set the assessment value on a piece of property, and that was the value of the old system as far as who controlled the assessment was concerned, and I would seriously ask the government to reconsider that position.

**Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold):** I listened with great pleasure. I'm fascinated by what the member for York Mills had to say about this legislation and I have some sympathy for him because this is his job. He's got to stand up here and defend this legislation, notwithstanding the fact that in his heart he may not agree with what it's going to do to people in his community and in communities across Ontario.

I also found of interest, because this has become something of a mantra for this government, the business about which previous government created new taxes and what the numbers were, but there's always the convenient omission of this government's creation of user fee after user fee after user fee.

I'll live with the realities of history, no two ways about it. This member, though, and his caucus mates have got to deal with the reality of new user fees left and right every time you turn around; user fees imposed on people who can ill afford them; hospitals being shut down across Ontario and indeed down in Niagara region; and hospitals being shut down in Tory backbench members' own ridings. One would hope they would be given the freedom to speak up and speak out against the government's policies which are shutting down hospitals, like the Port Colborne General Hospital, like the small but competent and essential hospital in Niagara-on-the-Lake and the one over in Grimsby.

Here is a government that would prefer, obviously, to dwell on the past, when in fact it has got hold of the reins now and the user fees and the hospital closings and the privatization and shutdown of nursing homes and seniors homes is creating devastation across this province.

**Ms Isabel Bassett (St Andrew-St Patrick):** It's interesting that the member for Welland-Thorold says nothing about bringing in much-needed changes to the property tax. He talks instead about hospitals, as if to divert us from some of the major changes that we're going to be talking about in this new legislation.

As the member for York Mills pointed out, Ontario's new assessment system is certainly going to be much fairer and more equitable, and in determining value-based assessment, actual value or current value is what we are going to be looking at, not highest and best use, as was advocated in the past.

It's also interesting, as the member for York Mills pointed out, that the assessments are going to be based on a 1996 assessment, which is a very stable year compared to the 1988 year that was very unstable, when the value of people's homes rose enormously. Also, taxes will be based on a three-year average of values to increase stability and certainty, which is much fairer than in the past. Unlike many market value proposals, municipalities are going to be able to opt for eight years to phase in the tax shift resulting from reassessment, special protection

to low-income seniors and low-income persons with disabilities, lower rates of tax on lower-valued commercial properties.

This is a much fairer system and people have no need to fear that when it comes in they will be pushed out of their homes. There's going to be a great period of time for them to adjust if their taxes are to go up, and an equal number of taxes are going to fall, as should be.

1530

**Mr Michael Brown:** I was most amused by the comments from the member opposite, as he discussed this. The first thing I discovered is, he is totally opposed to value-based assessment. This is second reading of the bill. On second reading of the bill, you vote on the basis of the principle. So I would take it that if Mr Turnbull is a man of principle, he will be voting against this measure because he has just told us that he is absolutely opposed to the principle of this bill. Yet the chief government whip through some of the most interesting — I use that word very carefully — discussion of all kinds of maybe important measures within the act certainly does not speak to the principle. He says he's opposed. He's got to vote against it. That's what he just said.

Certainly, as we review the Hansard of what Mr Turnbull said in previous parliaments, we know that he is very consistent. The only thing was, when he was in opposition he was actually going to vote against it rather than make speeches about whether you use a 1988 assessment or whether you use a 1996 assessment.

If you used a rolling average back in 1988, it would have been the years 1987, 1988 and 1989, I suspect. I don't know whether they will be much different than 1996, 1997 and 1998 because we don't know; 1997 and 1998 haven't happened, so we don't know whether or not this makes any kind of sense.

I just want Mr Turnbull to get up and twist in the wind some more. This is very entertaining. It makes no sense. If you're opposed, vote no.

**The Acting Speaker:** The member for York Mills has two minutes to respond.

**Mr Turnbull:** I will start with the member for Algoma-Manitoulin and I will suggest that you, sir, are twisting what I said. I said the principle of the value is an argument I've been against, but all of the other areas I believe are fair, infinitely more fair than anything that you or the NDP ever brought in. But talking about one thing and then doing something else, you were going to cut taxes, not quite as much as us but you were going to cut taxes. You were going to cut government spending but you weren't sure where. You didn't cost it out.

Then we had our friend from Kingston and The Islands. He seems to have difficulty with the fact that we're going to allow an eight-year mitigation so that anybody who is harmed by this — and on every tax shift that ever occurs, there are always people who are harmed and unless you accept that, you don't understand what goes on in government. As an ex-municipal politician, I suppose you're casting aspersions on other municipal politicians, that you're suggesting there would be skulduggery. I would assume not, sir. I would assume that the municipal politicians of Ontario would do the honourable thing.



As for the member for Welland-Thorold, he talks about hospitals being shut down. No, we're moving forward on the district health councils' report, which in point of fact his own government set up, and we have the Health Services Restructuring Commission, which is going to implement the program as recommended by the district health council so that it isn't politicized.

I thank my colleague the member for St Andrew-St Patrick for her kind words. She is a caring, decent, good politician who is interested in her constituents. I thank her very much.

**The Acting Speaker:** Further debate?

**Mrs Sandra Papatello (Windsor-Sandwich):** I am pleased today to speak to Bill 106, the Fair Municipal Finance Act. I would like, for the record, any of those who may be listening to understand that what this means to your property tax bill is quite simple: This bill along with all other government policy of the day will serve to increase your property tax bill. It is quite simple.

The people at home, whether you live in south Windsor, whether you live in La Salle, whether you live on Moy Avenue or Langlois Avenue or Oxley Avenue, the reality is that this government policy serves only to dump more costs on to municipalities and towns right across Ontario which will result in increased property taxes.

Today I'd like to focus specifically on the areas of health, social housing and the environment. I'd like to talk briefly about this reserve fund as well, and talk briefly too about exactly the difference between the income tax and property tax. I understand there are certain members, and particularly the member from Brampton, who are getting their knickers in a knot over this discussion that essentially will raise property taxes in Ontario.

If I may begin just in the area of health, let us make no mistake that when the Who Does What committee got to work, what they chose to do was discuss what was the most appropriate place to fund, to pay for: drop the costs on to cities and towns across Ontario or pay for through the reserves of the provincial government. What the Who Does What came up with was significantly different from what this government chose to do.

We had a discussion in this House and our Liberal colleagues asked those questions. As an example: the dumping of ambulance costs on to cities and towns. What does this mean for the residents of Windsor, for the residents of La Salle? Those municipal politicians will make a decision. They will cut the service regarding ambulance or they will pay for the service regarding ambulance. Those are the only two choices. I can tell you that the people in Windsor and La Salle are very responsible. We recognize we must have an ambulance service in Windsor and La Salle, so naturally they'll be paying for it. That is a cost that was not borne by Windsor and La Salle in the past. It is now going to be borne by my cities and towns. The same is true right across the province.

In total we're looking at \$300 million. If we look at those specifically: La Salle ambulance service, \$479,962; in Leamington, my colleague Bruce Crozier tells me Leamington Sun Parlor emergency service, \$2.9 million. The numbers are staggering. All this means that the good people of Leamington, their elected officials, will have

two choices. They will pay and have to find that money somewhere and they only have very few places to do that — they'll either charge user fees and through privatization they may choose to do that or they'll increase the property tax to find the revenue to pay for the ambulance service — or they won't have ambulance service, and that in my view will not be an option, so now we're down to just two.

We increase the property tax base in all our communities across the province to pay for ambulance service — even if we privatize, the municipalities, towns, cities are still paying for that — or perhaps they're going to charge new user fees on to the ambulance users, those who may actually get to use an ambulance.

We had an interesting discussion with people from Windsor who are paramedics, who are active in working for the ambulance service, and they said this is an example of what they do in the United States: Before the patient jumps on board in the back of the ambulance, they have the credit card swipe right near the door, so as you're launched into the ambulance you swipe the credit card on your way in, or you get an invoice.

Depending on whether you need Band-Aids or bandages when you're in the back of the ambulance, depending on if you need a splint for something or other, you're charged according to all the goods you must use.

1540

So here's the case, I guess. Will people who are sick, who are in need of help, who may or may not have the financial resources available for the service say, "Don't give me the arm splint; I haven't got the money to pay for it"? Will the cities and towns say: "You can't give out too many. We've got to start rationing the supplies because we're only prepared to pay X amount for our ambulance service"?

*Interjection.*

**Mrs Papatello:** That is exactly the point. If we look at what's happened in other communities, here's an article from St Catharines: "Ambulance Merger with US Giant. Port Colborne Included in Deal with Seven Services." This is true. This is a story dated just last week: "A giant US ambulance service is moving into Ontario by forming a new company with seven privately run services already here."

Interestingly enough, this very same company from the United States also provides fire services and it certainly leads us to believe in the heat of Bill 84, which is still upon us. What exactly is in the store for Ontarians when it comes to fire services? What is the Harris government's intent with our firefighters in Ontario? I can tell you the Windsor firefighters are gravely concerned. This is the perfect example of an Americanization of services that the people expect to be at a certain level, and it is usually services that should not be based on people's ability to pay, in particular in the area of health.

The area of public health is something else that's being dumped on to municipalities. For those of us in Windsor who are familiar with our public health institutions, we use them readily. We use them in our school programs. We have the public health nurses who go into classrooms. They talk about all kinds of hygiene issues, general health issues with kids. These are the kinds of services



now where the city councillors of Windsor and the balance of the politicians in Essex county will say: "Is this really necessary? Should we have it?"

This is part of preventive health care. Is that not what the Minister of Health said was going to be his priority? It seems to me both the one who resigned and the one we have today said that preventive health care is a priority with this government, and yet at the very first opportunity they have, they dump the cost of public health on to cities and towns across Ontario. What that means is cities and towns depending on the ability to pay from their property tax base will determine what level of public health that unit will have in their community.

If that truly is what this government had in mind, this government should have said so on June 8, 1995. This is not what the public in Ontario expected, that an element of health service as critical as preventive health care through our public health units would be dumped on to cities and towns and that its availability is going to be based on cities' and towns' and the property taxpayers' ability to pay for it.

Today in the House my colleague from Windsor-Walkerville spoke about the social housing that is being dumped on cities and towns across Ontario. The numbers run into the millions. We have to be especially concerned about how this affects the seniors in our community. I would think the Harris government took some time to show to the general public how genuinely interested they were in the wellbeing of seniors in Ontario. Why, they even appointed a cabinet minister to be in charge of seniors. Did this minister at the cabinet table say at any point in time, "Do not dump services that are required for seniors on to the local taxpayer"? Did he at any time come to the defence of seniors? Evidently not. Subsequent to this dumping measure, nothing has happened to change that.

Our colleague today came up with some very specific numbers. He talked about the numbers being downloaded right across Ontario. In Essex county, of 8,570 units that have been dumped on to Essex county at a cost of \$29 million, who will be paying that cost? The cities and towns of Essex county. Where will they get the money? They're going to get it from the property taxpayer, the very same people who've been guaranteed this wonderful income tax reduction will now be paying through the nose on their property taxes. These are the same people.

For the people at home, the significant difference in who pays and how you pay — property taxes are a significant regressive form of taxation. It doesn't matter what you earn, it doesn't matter what you can afford to pay, you must pay that level of property tax. That is significantly different from a provincial government getting income from people's ability to pay when it's linked to their income, and that's why income tax is a far more fair system of taxation. Those who make more pay more. Those who make less pay less. There was a very good reason why all those decades ago this system was brought into place.

For this government, of all governments, where Harris stood up and said, "I am the Taxfighter," I say it is sleight of hand today to be discussing the amount of dumping on cities and towns that will result in increased

property taxes, increased property taxes to be paid by the same people the Taxfighter was supposed to be helping. The Taxfighter hasn't helped anyone here. Moreover, he's helped far fewer people by punishing those with that tax level that's going to go up. The tax level is not linked to what they make in a year. It is strictly linked to the value of their property. It is the most regressive form of taxation, and that, in my view, is going to be very, very difficult for people to cope with, in particular for those who are on fixed incomes.

There are individuals in my own community who now are retirees, who are on a fixed income, whether that be pension or whatever. They've spent all their working lives paying for their homes. They are now enjoying their retirement. They have been able to estimate over the next 10 or 20 years exactly what —

*Interjection.*

**Mrs Pupatello:** If the member from Brampton has some comments to make about my family, I suggest he put that on the record so we can debate that in due course.

**Mr Joseph Spina (Brampton North):** You made personal comments about me. That didn't bother you then.

**Mrs Pupatello:** If we're going to discuss family, I suggest the member from Brampton put that on record, if we're going to talk about whose family pays for what. I suggest that he mind his manners.

**Mr Spina:** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: She makes personal attacks on the member for Brampton North in the House, but unfortunately she doesn't like the comments when they come back to her. I wish the Speaker would please bring that into account whenever she opens her mouth.

**The Acting Speaker:** I'd like to address the member for Brampton North. That is not a point of order and I would ask that in the future you graduate your comments at the end. If you had the opportunity of thinking, I would hope that you wouldn't use those kinds of words again.

The Chair recognizes the member for Windsor-Sandwich.

**Mrs Pupatello:** Thank you, Mr Speaker. It's unfortunate that you have to do the job of keeping these little children in line every once in a while.

Let me talk specifically about other community —

*Interjections.*

**The Acting Speaker:** Order. I asked the other member to think about his comments and I would ask that you do the same thing. I would ask you to keep it in a complimentary manner if you can, and at least debate in terms of the bill that's in front of us.

**Mrs Pupatello:** Thank you, Mr Speaker. Specifically, we have watched the sleight of hand by this Conservative government, and evidently supported by members, regardless of the region they happen to come from. I'd be very curious to know how concerned the members would be, say the member from Brampton: What is the dumping going on for the city of Brampton? Could it be millions of dollars in long-term health care? Could it be unit after unit of social housing costs dumped on to the city of Brampton? I find it passing strange that the member from



this particular riding would choose to make a personal attack instead of worrying about his own backyard and exactly where those property taxes are going to be by the time this policy is implemented.

I go further. If we review the area of Niagara, in Niagara we have 8,390 units of social housing being dumped on to the municipalities in Niagara at a total cost of almost \$42 million. Do I hear the members from those regions standing up and saying to Harris, "Don't dump these costs on to my property taxpayers"? I don't hear that anywhere. I don't hear these people, who rode in on the coattails of Mike the Taxfighter, standing up and worrying about property taxes in their own backyard.

1550

I find it reprehensible as well that we would hear time and time again this "not one cent from health care." That is not acceptable. In my own riding on Thursday evening we had a town hall of people truly concerned about health care. We packed them in. They came in by the hundreds. Half of this auditorium was standing because we simply didn't have the room to put them. We had microphones in place so people could speak. They spoke from the microphone and they talked about their own family members who have passed away and they talked about the experiences of their own family members in our local hospitals and how they had to be present 24 hours a day because the nursing complement simply wasn't there to take care of them.

These are stories that our members from Kitchener can easily relate to. These are stories that our member from Brampton could easily relate to, because they are hearing the same story. The difference is that depending on your political stripe, you are prepared to stand up for people who deserve good health care or not. You're prepared to stand up for those who deserve to have health care not based on whether they can afford it or not, but based on where they live, based on what property tax they can afford to pay. This is not acceptable.

Had the Conservative candidates stood up in the last election and said, "We're going to cut health care. We're going to cut your hospital services. We're not going to reinvest in your community services," and been elected, we wouldn't have anything to complain about, because the people would have known what was coming. The reality is there was a sleight of hand at work. You said one thing and you're doing another. You said you would reinvest in community health services and you've done nothing about it.

Did Mike Harris go to any libraries around and say, "We're going to shut your libraries down; moreover, we're going to introduce new user fees"? Mike Harris said no new user fees, again an example of sleight of hand. What he came up with instead was a "copayment" plan. Exactly which pocket does the copayment plan come out of that the user fee doesn't come out of? There are only a couple of places you can get money from, and most of the time it's the same taxpayer. It's the same taxpayer whether you write your cheque to pay your property tax or whether you pay the user fee as you hobble up into the back of the ambulance. That's the point here.

I would suggest that those members who dare to stand today or bicker or mock at anything I have to say about the health system listen very carefully. The people in Windsor-Essex are experiencing something today that is simply a year or two ahead of the balance of the province. We have very bad public policy in the area of health. This is very clear. It is very clear that the government has chosen to remove \$1.3 billion from hospitals, \$1.3 billion worth of hospital cuts that we can hardly afford, in particular in Windsor-Essex, which did everything the right way. They decided among themselves that they are going to merge and amalgamate and do all the right things to better manage —

**The Acting Speaker:** Order, please. I've been listening attentively and I was wondering if the member from Windsor would bring her comments within the terms of the bill, Bill 106.

**Mr Michael Brown:** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I think the comments were more relevant than anything made over there, but there should be a quorum here to hear the speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** Would the table check for a quorum, please.

**Senior Clerk Assistant and Clerk of Journals (Mr Alex D. McFedries):** A quorum is present, Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** The Chair recognizes the member for Windsor-Sandwich.

**Mrs Pupatello:** Thank you, Mr Speaker; I appreciate your comments as well. What could possibly be more relevant than the significant impact this dumping will have on the property tax base? While the government members want to stand up and say, "This is the difference between the MVA, the AVA, the who VA," the point is: "What is my property tax bill going to be? My property tax bill really is all that matters." I don't think the members who live in my community are all that concerned about what type of formula is used. The real relevant issue today that we cannot forget is that in this sleight of hand, while you wish to put forward Bill 106, you have already shoved down the throats of cities and towns across Ontario significant charges. The only place they will find the money is in their property tax base or in instituting user fees, the very thing that the Premier said he would never do, the biggest broken promise of this government, "No new user fees." To date we have counted 1,003 new user fees since June 8, 1995.

**Mr Kormos:** How many?

**Mrs Pupatello:** One thousand and three new user fees only in this last year and a half. Good Lord, what we still have in store for us until the next election.

I have this image of those of us requiring significant ambulance services leaping into the back of the ambulance and swiping the credit card on the way in, if they happen to have the credit card. I ask the Conservative members, are these the kinds of health services you told the people of Ontario they were going to have if they voted for a Conservative government? I don't think so. That, my friends, is a broken promise. Windsor is the perfect example of the biggest broken promise of this government: bad public policy in health care.

The dumping of long-term health care on to municipalities is one of the most destructive things that this



government could do, to imagine that cities and towns can of their own effort, based solely on their property tax base, determine the needs over the next 10 years of what their housing costs will be or what their nursing home costs will be. All of us know; we all read the right books. Dr Foot, in Boom, Bust and Echo, talks about where our generations are going to be in 10 years' time.

At the same time our Minister of Education stood up and said, "We're taking away the most risky cost to the taxpayer; we're removing the education tax." That, my friends, was the most stable of them, and what you've given them in return is the most risky. It's the one you can't control because, much as you believe, you cannot control the economy, you don't know what welfare costs are going to be in five years or three years, and you have dumped that cost on to municipalities. Every one of consequence in this debate has told you it's wrong.

**Mr Michael Brown:** What did Crombie say?

**Mrs Papatello:** David Crombie said something like, "It's ridiculous." I watched Terry Mundell walk out of his meeting with the ministers the other day, head down, shaking his head. I watched his disappointment that he couldn't get the ministers to say, "I'm going to reverse this policy decision," because he knew it was a disaster. He walked out of that meeting, having gotten absolutely nowhere with the Premier, the Minister of Finance, the Minister of Housing or the Minister of Community and Social Services, knowing full well that this is the worst thing you could give to property taxpayers across Ontario, absolutely the worst thing.

I'd love to know who is advising the Minister of Health in particular on this bad public policy of dumping costs on to cities and towns across Ontario. Where ambulance services are concerned, long-term care is concerned, public health institutions are concerned, you've just dumped all the services that are going to be critical over the next 10 years to an aging population in Ontario. It is simply bad public policy.

We're going to talk to the people in Markham later today and we're going to wonder how the people in Markham are going to fare. People in Markham have a relatively low welfare base. Ah, but don't uncross your fingers too quickly. They're still in negotiations about how they're going to pool or repool the cost of Metro's welfare. The people in Markham could very well end up paying for Metro's social welfare; and the people of Oakville. Even though they were prepared to have the minister come down for this grand announcement of the dumping of those costs on Oakville, depending on the outcome of how they choose to pool these costs, Oakville's going to be dragged in there kicking and screaming and picking up a significant portion of those costs. That is the reality.

Let's be very clear: Initially it was going to be a revenue-neutral deal. When the Who Does What subcommittee panel sat down initially — and these people spent hours and hours just going through much of this to determine what was the right thing to do — they were told that fiscal neutrality was not to be a part of it but that they were to do the right thing. When they chose to do the right thing, the right thing was never to dump welfare costs on to cities and towns.

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When he spoke to us, our county of Essex administrator, John Curran, said that it seemed to be the most futile effort he ever went through. He spent hours of his time traipsing back and forth to sit on this committee to be part of something that would actually do some good, and instead he wasn't listened to at all. They completely ignored the Crombie report; they completely ignored John Curran, who has such a wealth of knowledge and experience in this area.

What he said in the end I found quite interesting: "What has recently been described by Premier Harris in one of his television spots as a complex and dilapidated wiring system can now be depicted as a bowl of spaghetti." That from Mr Curran from Essex county. Who would know better than this gentleman what life has been like and what he perceives it's going to be like because of the significant dumping on cities and towns across Ontario?

They've stood up and said: "But that's okay. Even if we're a little bit in the negative, we've got a special reserve fund for you." I'd like to ask the member from Scarborough, Mr Gilchrist, exactly how many times over they're going to keep spending and respending this reserve fund. I don't know how many billions are in there, but apparently he's told the people of Metro, "Don't worry; \$800 million for your social housing. That's okay, we've got the fund." So what do you tell the people in Ottawa? Can you say, "It's okay, we've got the fund"? Listen, by the time you finish telling everybody that you've got this special fund because they've ended up in the negative, you've spent that fund five times. The reality is, you're not going to be able to use that fund for everyone who needs it.

One of the ministers chooses to shake her head. These are the facts. You can only add up numbers to come up with a certain result. The ministers have had to recant of late because now they admit the cities and towns are going to be in a negative position: "Oops, we forgot to mention that when we announced the dumping. We said it was going to be equal, but now it's a little bit in the negative. But that's okay because we've got this special fund."

I want to know how many towns and cities now are going to be forced to come cap in hand, head down, begging for money from the provincial coffers. Will the receipt of the money from those funds be determined by who asks, what connections to the Conservative Party, what kind of political bias? Is partisanship going to be party to who gets the money from the funds? I cannot think of anything more inappropriate than cities and towns coming begging to the Conservative government only through their links through the Conservative Party.

I'm certainly not off the mark yet, because if we have our television ads and the way the television ads were given away, we have more pork barrelling going on than we've seen in history. They're back, the Conservatives of old are back. Despite all the cuts to places like Windsor and our health care system, we have seen this government spend more money on television ads alone, \$2.3 million. This, friends, is more than the Conservative government spend during its election campaign.



**Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland):** How about the 1980s?

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin):** The member for Northumberland.

**Mrs Papatello:** I've got to say, \$2.3 million that could very well have gone into ambulance services, hospital services. How dare this government stand and say it's going to close the emergency centre at Windsor Western when it has not brought more funds in to build up the other two sites? They'll just shut it down with no service in our community to pick it up. That is not acceptable and is just an example of bad public policy in the area of health.

The minister has heard us repeatedly tell him that there are errors that have been made in their policy. You cannot holus-bolus shut down services in hospitals before those services are available through some other mechanism in the community. That has not happened. The Sandwich health centre is now looking for \$100,000 to cut because it's been told that its budget has been slashed — this in the same community where we're losing our emergency services.

On the day of our town hall the minister announced the designation as an underserviced area. Well, thank you so much, Minister. Thank you for moving the story of our town hall from A-5 to A-1 so that everyone can know that underserviced designation does not help us this week, does not help us next year. What we need is to stop the base funding cuts to our hospitals, to reinvest that money in community services in our community. That was the basis. We bargained in good faith when we struck that deal with the province and we have not been dealt with in good faith by this government.

One message that I might leave with the caucus members of the Conservative Party: Please look in your backyard to see a significant lack, a significant error in policy concerning the health system. None of us can stand for it any longer.

**The Deputy Speaker:** I'd just like to remind the members that we're debating Bill 106, An Act respecting the financing of local government. That's what we're supposed to debate. Questions or comments?

**Mr Kormos:** As I was listening to the member for Windsor-Sandwich speak and hearing the points of order, points of privilege, points of anything they can grasp at, the problem is that the government members still don't understand that no single piece of legislation stands by itself. Here we are with Bill 106, and as I indicated to you last week, these are all pieces of a puzzle. You can't talk about Bill 106 in isolation from the devastation that this government is wreaking upon communities across this province. It's part and parcel of this agenda.

I suspect that the government members won't be happy, they won't think that any of us are speaking to the topic, unless we're reading the same flaccid, canned, effete, pathetic speeches that they read, trying to prop up nasty, vicious legislative efforts. Well, news, folks: I'm not going to read your crummy little speeches, because I don't believe them, the public doesn't believe them and I know that more and more of you don't believe them.

I know that among government backbenchers there are growing cells of discontent; there are. There are people

who when they go back to their communities are getting a message right in the viscera from constituents who have had it up to here and aren't going to take any more. I simply wish for those backbenchers the courage to stand up and speak out. Yes, speak out against Mike Harris and his policies. You'll be rewarded for it by your constituents, because as I look across the floor and as I reflect upon the crisis that this government is creating here in Toronto with its megacity proposal and on what the inevitable reaction of taxpayers and voters is going to be, I see a whole lot of Tory members —

**The Deputy Speaker:** Thank you. I listened attentively to your questions and comments. It had nothing to do with Bill 106, nothing at all. We must debate on the bill. That is the order of the day.

**Mr Derwyn Shea (High Park-Swansea):** I join the member for Windsor-Sandwich in the abject disgust that she must feel towards the federal Liberal government that has downloaded on this province \$3.7 billion in transfer payments, which has affected our education and dramatically impacted upon our health care. I share that. But I want to return to the issue before us, Speaker, as you've asked us to do, the issue of assessment for —

**Mrs Papatello:** You're desperate.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The member for Windsor-Sandwich, you had your turn. Now it's your turn to listen attentively to what is being said by the member for High Park-Swansea.

**Mr Shea:** I'd like to remind us of an editorial that was in the Toronto Star on January 17:

"The problems are well documented. Provincial data for 1992 shows, for example, many of Toronto's rich and famous living in homes not assessed for decades and taxed a low rate while young, struggling families are paying for higher taxes."

I remind us that is what this government is trying to do: to redress the imbalance that is currently in the assessment system. I'm ashamed of some of my colleagues who are not supporting the government in this effort.

The member for York Mills understands the issue only too well. He has pointed out the fact that the assessment tax flow leaving Metro has been damaging this municipality for years, at the rate of \$100 million per year. I remind you, they want to see Metropolitan Toronto damaged.

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But the greatest sadness of their position to this point deals with tenants, because this bill in fact redresses a terrible injustice as visited upon tenants. Right now they are assessed four to five times more than private homeowners. The Liberals and the NDP do not want to see that redressed, and I say, sir, shame on them for trying to delay this.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Thank you. Your time has expired. The member for Kingston and The Islands.

**Mr Gerretsen:** Earlier in the debate today I was chastised by the chief government whip to the effect that I didn't trust municipal politicians. I do trust municipal politicians. But I think it should be understood by the people of the province of Ontario that the assessment function should not take place at the same level that actually sets the taxes as well.



But it goes even further than that. I have in my hand a request for tender document issued by the government of Ontario in which it is asking suppliers, basically local real estate firms, to come up with quotes in order to do the assessment in specific geographic areas across the province. I can tell you that this document contains a list of about 20 or 30 pages of municipalities where the assessment is going to be done privately by real estate firms in those particular areas. You tell me, is that fair? Should the assessment people who are still working for the assessment department for the province of Ontario not be doing this job?

You talk about the kind of system we're going to get. In effect, we're going to have different standards and different people doing the assessments in different areas rather than out of one uniform government department which has done it for the last 25 years.

Again I go back to the way it was before 1970, where in effect the assessment function was carried on by each local municipality, and the mishmash of assessment information and the assessed values we had in this province then. I say to the government once again, I call upon you to take a serious look at that. I know you're trying to save \$120 million, which you're downloading on municipalities, but it's simply not correct to have the assessment done by the same level that in effect sets the tax rate as well.

**Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie):** I also want to say, as the member for Windsor-Sandwich said this afternoon, that you cannot look at this piece of legislation alone, singly, standing by itself; it fits into a larger agenda that this government is, each day as we come here, unfolding in front of us. On the surface, it's actually rather simple, but once you get into it, it's a real quagmire of quicksand that sucks in all of those things that we as a community of people collectively have decided we can afford better together than we can individually.

In this instance, we have a bill that's going to, yes, perhaps be helpful in terms of equalizing a system or making it the same across the province. But you can't look at that without looking at the larger system within which it fits, and that's the downloading of the cost of services on municipalities by this government by way of all the bills we're dealing with here in this extraordinary session of the House that has come back since Christmas and hopes to be done before the spring sets in.

What this government is about is the diminishing of the role of government. It's about cutting the cost of government at the expense of the services all of us have come to rely on as workers, as seniors, as women and children in this province, for education, for health care and for social assistance, and the turning over of some of that to the private sector, because there's a feeling here that they can deliver it in a more cost-effective fashion.

They're rejigging the way we collect taxes, who collects taxes, so that in fact at the end of the day this puzzle all fits together and we all end up losers.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The member for Windsor-Sandwich, you have two minutes to reply.

**Mrs Pupatello:** Thank you so much, to the members who chose to respond to my statements of the last half-hour. I have to tell you it is quite alarming to watch the

disintegration of the health system in Windsor and Essex county. That is certainly my priority and the priority of any of us who come from our area.

I'll tell you that in the discussion of Bill 106 today on taxes, it is clear that this, along with all the other policies being put forward by this government, will result in increased property taxes.

Make no mistake that this government has selected to dump, and if we view the kinds of services they've dumped on cities and towns and on property taxpayers across Ontario, they are most significantly linked to health. I thought health was a priority with this ministry, with this government. Mike Harris said specifically, "Not one cent."

What this Premier, Mike Harris, and this Minister of Health have selected to do is to dump more and more costs on to residential taxpayers, on property taxpayers, and property tax is the most regressive form of taxation that exists. It is absolutely wrongheaded. I am very concerned about the direction that the policymakers are having in the Ministry of Health. It will be absolutely devastating to us in Windsor-Essex county. Moreover, it must be reversed. Funding has to stop being cut. Funding must go into community services, not dumping those services on to the taxpayers across Ontario.

To those who have selected to make more of a personal attack, may I tell you that thankfully not only do I have jackets but also have shoulder pads. I just accept all those comments from any member, regardless of the type, and certainly when I leave the House, I'm still smiling. For those who chose to focus, as the member for Welland-Thorold —

**The Deputy Speaker:** Thank you. Time has expired. I just want to remind the members again that we're debating Bill 106, An Act respecting the financing of local government. Further debate?

**Mr Kormos:** Speaker, before I get into the content, I understand what you're saying. We're debating Bill 106. I'm going to debate Bill 106 for 30 minutes because that's the maximum amount of time allotted to me. But I'm going to refer you — and I have every respect for you, Speaker, and I don't want anything to happen over the next 30 minutes that's going to affect that — to the title of the bill: An Act respecting —

**The Deputy Speaker:** I'd just like to inform you that the Speaker doesn't react to comments. I'll follow the procedures and if you don't debate Bill 106, I will remind you very, very straightforwardly.

**Mr Kormos:** Thank you, Speaker. That's why I'm addressing my comments to the Speaker. So here we are, we've got Bill 106, An Act, as you pointed out — look, I didn't make up the title to the act. These guys did. The title of an act, as you well know, sir, is part and parcel of the body of the act, and the act can be read in the context of the title, and let's say as well the subtitles. We're talking about Bill 106, but it's An Act respecting the financing of local government. What does the financing of local government mean? It means property taxes, and that's what we're going to talk about for 30 minutes.

We go to the final section of the bill and this is where it gets a little weird, because here's another one of those oxymoronic short titles that the Tories are so fond of.



The short title of the act is the Fair Municipal Finance Act. That's where we start to get into some real trouble about the contradiction between that so-called short title and what the act is going to do.

Here I am, as I mentioned to you earlier today during members' statements, just up from Welland-Thorold, and who was I with? It's not inappropriate that we're talking about property taxes, An Act respecting the financing of local government, because I was with a bunch of property taxpayers this morning down at the Lions Club, just like there was a group of property taxpayers holding a press conference and meeting in Thorold and in St Catharines.

The member for St Catharines, Jim Bradley, tells me he was up with those people from SSTOP. I told you about that earlier. It's an acronym: Seniors and Supporters Together Opposing Privatization. These people are taxpayers. Let me tell you what they know about property taxes. The folks down in regional Niagara know that this government's downloading on to property taxpayers is going to create new property taxes to the tune of at least \$73 million for the taxpayers of regional Niagara. Bill 106 is, I suppose, all about how municipal governments are going to have access to that additional \$73 million in property taxes, isn't it?

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The folks from Seniors and Supporters Together Opposing Privatization were responding to a report that regional Niagara received indicating that, in response to the massive downloading of taxes by this government on to property taxpayers in Niagara, Welland-Thorold, St Catharines, Niagara Falls, Lincoln, Fort Erie, Port Colborne, Niagara-on-the-Lake, every single community in that region, one of the options, and it didn't recommend it but it says, that the region has in response to this downloading by the government is to shut down, privatize, sell off three of our six senior citizens' homes, when we already have lineups and waiting lists of seniors — people who've worked hard all their lives, our folks, our grandfolks, our spouses as we get older, still on waiting lists to get into a seniors' home and yet the region is being forced to consider the selloff, the privatization of 50% of its seniors' housing stock. Property taxpayers are concerned about that.

Market value assessment, I should tell you — and that's what this bill is all about. Let's not make a mistake about that. I can't for the life of me see how some of these Tory backbenchers persist in reading the little blurbs given to them out of their whip's office or their House leader's office or wherever that stuff comes from, somehow suggesting that the —

**Mr Michael Brown:** The whiz kids.

**Mr Kormos:** Is it coming from the backroom boys, the Tom Longs and the rest of the Longites? The brain trust? Perhaps another oxymoron.

Somehow little slips of paper are telling the Tory — because there are Tory backbenchers here who are familiar with market value assessment. Some of them have had involvement in municipal politics. They know MVA when they see it and they know that what was referred to as actual value assessment in the Golden report and in the BC model is a far cry from what's contained in Bill 106. This is market value assessment,

plain and simple, undeniable. It's there; it's in black and white. To call it anything else is to engage in a deception.

Why I want to stress that is, you see, where I come from, people know all about market value assessment. They heard all the arguments about fairness. You tell that to the folks on Dover Road or Dunkirk Road or Calais Street or Simpson Avenue down in ward 3 in Welland, seniors, retirees living in their modest wartime houses that, oh, they fixed up during the years. There are folks there, families who have lived in those homes consistently throughout, for the last 50 years. When they got those little houses as returning veterans with their spouses they had coal heaters in them, wood floors, no cupboards, a little coal box in the back and a door cut through the back. The folks who live in those houses know exactly what I'm talking about: little two-bedroom wartime houses.

Others who haven't lived in them for 50 years bought them knowing they were modest. We've got houses down there, some of them, 650 to 850 square feet, but whole families were raised in them. These are decent homes and these are decent people who live in them and many, if not most of them, now retirees on very modest fixed incomes.

Folks who worked lifetimes over at the Wabasso cotton mill or some of the other non-union shops around Welland tended not to be high wage earners, but no less hardworking, I tell you, no less committed to raising their families and seeing their kids do a little better than they were.

They know all about market value assessment because they've endured it. They've lived through it. They saw their property taxes increase by 50% to 100% when they were whacked with the fairness of market value assessment, and now they have to consider whether they're going to be able to live out their retirement years even in those modest wartime homes, because they had budgeted. When they acquired a piece of property, a home to live in as a retirement home, a little two-bedroom, 650-square-foot wartime home, they calculated what the taxes were. They relied on that as a way of budgeting what they were going to be able to sustain by way of living accommodations throughout their retirement years. But I tell you, they were beaten over the head with market value assessment.

Were there winners? No two ways about it: There were winners. There are winners at that casino down in Niagara too, but I tell you, the majority of people walking out the exit doors of Casino Niagara are losers, not winners, and the majority of homeowners confronted by market value assessment similarly are going to be losers, not winners. What was, I suppose for me particularly, downright embarrassing is that market value assessment on my old house on Bald Street, along with a whole lot of my neighbours, I concede it, to my embarrassment actually generated — and again, when I talk fairness, what's fair? I tell you, and there's no secret, my taxes dropped by \$100. Here I am, not as young as from time to time I wish I was, earning, I concede, far more money than most working people. My taxes drop, yet an old couple, seniors in their 70s or 80s, are forced to pay taxes that are 50% to double of what they were from market



value assessment. That's not fairness at the end of the day, is it, Speaker? It's not fairness at all. It's a vicious attack on the ability of lower-income and fixed-income homeowners to own and maintain their homes.

I've got to tell you, I used to be a member of city council in Welland back in 1985. That's when I first became familiar with market value assessment, because there were some of those people there who were hell-bent on seeing market value assessment imposed. I was as adamant. I dug my heels in, no two ways about it. So did a whole lot of other councillors. But I dug my heels in, and no way was I going to concede anything about fairness in the market value assessment process. The numbers may, at the end of the day, generate a perception of fairness, but fairness is what you end up with when all the accounting and all is said and done.

When I see old folks and when I see fixed-income people risking losing what are almost inevitably relatively modest homes — not that they're not nice homes; of course they're nice homes, but Robin Leach isn't inclined to come visit them, if you know what I mean. They are their homes. When I see the home ownership of seniors and old folks and retirees and people on fixed incomes being jeopardized, you can call it fair all you want, but it's the most unjust of policies that could ever be imposed, I tell you that.

You see, down in Niagara there's going to be a real property tax crisis. We all know that, because this government has downloaded \$73 million, and that's just the count to date. We've had increases in our welfare rolls, as unemployment has risen under this government's regime. We've seen unemployment go up. Youth unemployment is double what it is for their parents. As we see those levels of unemployment rise and more families and folks being forced to rely on an already punitive welfare system and when we understand that this government has downloaded the cost of funding general welfare assistance on to municipalities, we're going to see property taxes increase even higher and higher and higher, all the more so in communities that have the highest levels of unemployment and the least ability to sustain those higher property taxes.

There's strange stuff going on. Let me tell you, we spoke to the Minister of Community and Social Services today about the deal that she and the government struck with this American consulting firm to revise, revamp the welfare system. I scratch my head. Here the minister was, as smug as anybody could be about having all the answers. Now all of a sudden she's going to line the pockets of some US operation with millions and millions of dollars of Ontario taxpayers' money to finish off — I called it the culling of the welfare rolls.

1630

Again I suggested, perhaps unfairly — maybe it was unfair; I really don't think so at the end of the day, but some might think it was unfair — that maybe she had lost her passion for the bloodletting, that the sounds and smell of the abattoir had finally overcome her so she was prepared to start contracting some of the dirty work out, because that's what Andersen is all about. It's all about the completion of the culling. It's all about completing this attack on the poor instead of declaring a war on

poverty. It's all about punishing the poor for being unemployed and jobless and their children for being the children of families who are going to be impacted oh so acutely by Bill 106.

It's property taxes that at the end of the day are going to pay the tab that Andersen's going to come up with, isn't it? Of course, at the end of the day, that's where we've seen the downloading take place for revenue generation, and it's property taxes and property taxpayers who are going to pick up the tab.

But my question — because I'm going to go into the business of property assessors, tax assessors, and the RFP that just went out for contracting out. That's why I bring up Andersen. This government likes doing business with American corporations and American operations. It doesn't like giving jobs to Ontarians. It doesn't. Look at the history. Minister of Transportation: Who does the Ministry of Transportation hire to do the line painting, a significant contract, on the new expanded stretches of the Queen Elizabeth Way, the QEW, down in Niagara? Does it hire Ontarians who want and need the work? No, it hires an American operation with American workers.

I'm getting to the point about the RFP for property tax assessors. When the Ministry of Transportation develops its scheme to put up glitzy ad signs, it's going to rent out — it's the Burma Shave syndrome. Who does it hire? Who does it contract with to fabricate these signs? An American firm, American workers making profits for Americans in the United States with property tax dollars, the very sorts of things that Bill 106 is designed to accommodate.

And now where does the Ministry of Community and Social Services go for expertise? We're going to see that from the Minister of Finance as well once Bill 106 is passed. Doesn't this government have any faith in expertise here in Ontario? It doesn't trust Ontario workers, or maybe it just plain doesn't like them. I think it's the latter. It's not that this government distrusts Ontario workers.

**Mr Turnbull:** What about Casino Windsor? Who got the contract for that?

**The Deputy Speaker:** The member for York Mills.

**Mr Kormos:** You see, you do that, Speaker, and all that does is let him point to the Hansard to say, see, he was sitting here all afternoon.

Here we've got a Minister of Community and Social Services who clearly just plain doesn't like Ontario workers.

**The Deputy Speaker:** I'm trying to warn you, silent signs to bring you back to Bill 106. You don't seem to get the message. It's Bill 106.

**Mr Kormos:** Thank you, Speaker. The RFP, I'm told, has already gone out for property tax assessors. What this government's looking to do — and it's very peculiar because maybe we'd better warn the municipalities now that they've got to pick up the tab for assessment as well. That was traditionally a provincial responsibility, and there were very good reasons for it. One was because the assessment job is a very sensitive and delicate one; one was to create some arm's length between the assessment process and the municipalities themselves so that there



would be something as akin to fairness as this type of property tax system could ever generate.

But this government is going to put property tax assessors on the payroll of municipalities so that property tax assessors will become all that much more susceptible to, oh, the nudge, the wink and the nod of political forces in municipalities.

At the same time, here I am in the House. One wonders whether these debates have any impact at all. One wonders. Can I tell you this, Speaker? I got a letter from a couple of folks here in Toronto. They sent me a copy of the letter they wrote to the member for Etobicoke-Rexdale. It was a very short letter, scathing. I'll read the whole thing; it's not long.

**The Deputy Speaker:** As long as it is related to Bill 106.

**Mr Kormos:** To Bill 106 and the process, because this relates directly to megacity, and Bill 106 and megacity are intertwined as well. You know that, Speaker, I know you do.

Here's a letter of November 27, 1996, that these folks wrote to the member for Etobicoke-Rexdale. The letter says "John Hastings." It says: "With due consideration of all written and verbal arguments for and against the proposed amalgamation concerning Metropolitan Toronto, we, the undersigned, strongly oppose any such amalgamation. The present Conservative government does not deserve any benefit of the doubt."

Pretty straightforward for me, pretty unequivocal, as they say down in Welland-Thorold. It doesn't leave any doubt in your mind where these folks stand. Why aren't they being listened to? They sent me a copy of the letter they received from the member for Etobicoke-Rexdale, a Tory backbencher: "Dear Mr and Mrs.... Thank you for your letter of support for our government's Bill 103." What was the use? What goes on? I told these people: "Do you know what's going to happen? You're going to end up on a Tory fund-raising list soon."

Clearly the Tory backbenchers aren't reading their mail. Some psychologists might call it cognitive dissonance. Others might call it plain stupidity. Others might call it arrogance and presumptuousness. "Thank you for your letter of support for our government's Bill 103." Please. It's the boilerplate stuff. It's the stuff that comes out of the brain trust. They sit up late at night earning probably far less money than they deserve or far less money than they would receive if they belonged to a collective bargaining unit. They sit up late at night writing this stuff and they tell their members, "Don't worry about what constituents are saying, just send them this letter back and cite it as presented to you." Needless to say, I intend to make reference to this correspondence as often as I'm permitted to with the indulgence of the Speaker, as we debate Bill 106. It's all about property taxation.

I'll tell you something that's important to the folks down in Welland-Thorold and, I'm confident, to the people in small towns across Ontario: Bill 106 eradicates the business occupancy tax. Let's understand exactly what that does and let's understand all the more so what that does in small communities like Welland that have been struggling to restore some people to their down-

town, because their downtowns have been savaged by the malls around the perimeter of the city.

The business occupancy tax varied depending on the type of business that was occupying a particular property. In the case of, for instance, banks — big, profitable, corporate banks that have been gouging their customers for years and years now and literally stealing money from their customers when the opportunities arise, and I know they will.

I told you a couple of months ago, maybe six months ago, about how the TD Bank has stolen money from its customers, emptied out bank accounts, drained every last nickel and dime out of them. I warned people then, if they had an account at the Toronto-Dominion Bank, to go there — run, don't walk — to your nearest TD Bank, take the money out and put it in a credit union where it belongs and where you can have confidence your money will be taken care of.

Banks — profitable. We're talking about record profits for the second year in a row, multibillion-dollar profits, and no small part of it gleaned from the retirees and the pensioners and the working poor of Welland and Thorold and every other community like that across the province.

**1640**

The banks have been paying a business occupancy tax based on 75% of their assessment. Small businesses, which this government purports to — well, this government knows diddly about small business. This government's idea of small business is the same as Catherine Swift's. Small business to this government is 100 non-union employees working for minimum wage. That's what this government thinks small business is. That's what Catherine Swift thinks small business is. They wouldn't know spit from Shinola when it came to small business, I tell you.

It's small businesses that are going to get the shaft, because just as banks were paying 75% of their assessment on business occupancy tax, real small business, small retail outlets, places like Elio's shoe store, the boot shop, the one over in downtown Thorold, family-run — these people work hard and they also sell a darned good cowboy boot for a good price, I tell you. That's over on Front Street in Thorold, Elio's shoe stop — shoe shop, which is your last stop for shoes, I suppose.

People like Elio's have been paying business occupancy tax based on 30% of their assessment; people like Dietrich's in Welland, over on Cross Street. Here's Dietrich and his family. They run a small clothing store, have stuck with downtown Welland, serve their customers well, have invested in downtown Welland even when at times it seemed like it was an uphill battle, but there's Dietrich hanging in.

You see, what's going to happen is that the municipality is still going to have to generate the same gross revenues that were generated in the course of business occupancy tax levy. So what's going to happen? We know what's going to happen. The overall property taxes for banks and similar large, profitable corporations are going to drop while the little guys, the Elio's shoe store down on Front Street in Thorold, the Dietrich's over on Cross Street in Welland, are going to end up paying more. There aren't the resources there to do it.



Why does this government pick on the little people to punish? Let me tell you about a young worker in London, one Darrin Davies. He just purchased his first home over on St Julien Street. He purchased a home, knowing what the taxes were. As a matter of fact he took advantage of low interest rates, hoping that things would work out, that he'd be able to pay off that home. If he was lucky, I suppose, he'd maintain his job, wouldn't be forced on to the unemployment rolls — he knows there's a risk; with this government there sure is a risk — forced on to the streets. He's hoping, I suppose, that now that he's bought a small home over on St Julien in London, he might even have the right to start a family. It's his right, isn't it?

But this government says no to young workers like Darrin Davies, says: "No, you can't bank on the future with the Tories in power. You can't depend upon us to create any stability or security such that you can embark on starting a family, because that house you think you bought may not even be yours in a year or two years' time when we jack up property taxes to the point where it's simply going to be impossible for you to maintain that modest home that you were prepared to invest in with the hope of starting a family." Where is the confidence level out there in this government?

Talk to the women and their kids who have been betrayed by the Attorney General and his bungling, his mismanagement, his incompetent fumbling of the family support plan. These women are property taxpayers too, whether they're tenants or whether they're struggling to keep a family home that they're about to lose because the Attorney General screwed up and refused to admit it.

The Attorney General persisted in standing in this House day after day and insisting there was nothing wrong with the FSP up in Downsview, that these were all just little glitches in the system. When he was confronted with the videotape, my God, his response was immediate. These women who are victims of the FSP are victims of Bill 106 as well. They're property taxpayers too. How many times is this government going to victimize them?

The Attorney General shows his total lack of interest and concern for women and their kids who need the small amounts of support that's owed them. The Minister of Finance persists in talking about actual value assessment when in fact he's delivering market value assessment, which has been the bane of oh so many property owners across Ontario to date. Because of their revocation of the business occupancy tax, this government is in effect levying new and higher taxes on bona fide, real small business people while it's giving tax relief to the big, profitable banks, to the TDs and the CIBCs and the Royal Banks etc.

This government has got RFPs out to contract out assessment. Again, maybe some of their American corporate friends can bid on that contract too. Maybe this government can bleed even more money out of the pockets of Ontario taxpayers and put it into the profit margins of big American corporations when it contracts out assessment to an American firm.

Folks in Welland know all about market value assessment, they know all about it. The seniors know about it, the working poor know about it, retirees know about it, young families know all about it. The last way any of

them would describe it is as "fair," because fairness, as I say, has to be determined at the end of the day.

Speaker, you've been very generous and charitable with your attention, and I appreciate your concern about this issue and your focus on it while I made these brief comments. Thank you, sir.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Questions and comments?

**Mr Shea:** I've been listening intently to the member. I am still struggling somewhat with the comments he made in one of his earlier interventions when he in fact failed to acknowledge that it was the government of the New Democratic Party that indeed got up to the altar to perform the marriage with market value assessment only to discover that there was an extraordinary hit upon Ontario Hydro, I think something to the tune of \$60 million, that caused them simply to pull back for a moment.

The interventions from my Liberal colleagues, whom I always respect, also failed to acknowledge the fact that in terms of assessment reform, which everybody in this House recognizes the need for, they failed to finally consummate the market value assessment which the government of their day had determined it would commit to based upon the 1988 property values; that would in fact have brought Metropolitan Toronto financially to its knees.

What I'm concerned about is that in the debate no one in the opposition parties is addressing the fact that this revision brings a great deal of justice and hope to tenants in this province and particularly in Metropolitan Toronto, where in fact they are overtaxed four and five times what a householder is taxed, and they're not addressing that. They're not addressing the terrible outflow of assessment value from Metropolitan Toronto, which is truly turning that inner area into the hole of the doughnut. They're not addressing that \$100-million haemorrhaging. They're not addressing the fact that this proposal in fact brings in a system which is fair and equitable. It gives a three-year average, it gives eight-year mitigation for seniors so that they are not hurt. It indeed in fact gives us assessment based upon current use, not upon the highest and best —

**The Deputy Speaker:** Your time has expired.

**Mr Michael Brown:** I want to speak to some of the things the member for Welland-Thorold was talking about, because I think some of those issues are straight from the heart. I was particularly struck as he talked about the folks in those 650- or 800-square-foot war-time homes, where they bought them, they fixed them up, they invested their lives in them and under market value assessment soon saw that it was very difficult to maintain those.

I'm interested in that because I have a letter on my desk in my office from a gentleman in Elliot Lake. Elliot Lake, as members would know, has been a huge success in attracting retirees and people on generally fixed incomes, not necessarily modest but fixed. The gentleman expresses the very real concern that he moved to Elliot Lake not just for all its amenities, as it has a large amount of amenities, but because the cost of living was extremely reasonable. He talks to me about all the dumping of services from the province to the municipal taxpayer, ie, him, and he's wondering whether he is



going to be able to afford to live in this beautiful community over the long term.

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When we talk about this issue we have to understand that it's not market value or actual value, it's the bottom line: "How much do I have to pay to live in my house?" That's what this is all about. The member for Welland-Thorold spoke to that eloquently. The government has to understand that there will be a real report card on this and that will be the bottom line of your property tax bill.

**Ms Shelley Martel (Sudbury East):** I want to commend my colleague from Welland-Thorold for the comments he made here this afternoon with respect to Bill 106, this bill that is entitled An Act respecting the financing of local government, which should just as well be titled "An Act to force seniors, young families, small businesses, people on fixed income to pay more property taxes," because at the end of the day, as you look through the changes that the government proposes and as you take into context the changes that the government proposes with its downloading of any number of services and the millions and millions of dollars of costs attached to that, to the municipalities, that is in effect the position that all of these people are going to find themselves in.

As the government eliminates the business property tax, the government gives a huge gift to its friends in the banking community. Let's face the facts: Banks now, because this measure is in place, pay their fair share. But as the government moves to eliminate this tax, it's going to dump right back on to the small businesses, the mom-and-pop stores in any number of our communities, to pick up that loss. Municipalities are not going to be able to forgo the revenue. Municipalities are going to have to look to other sources to recoup the revenue that would have come in and are going to end up hitting the small mom-and-pop stores to a much greater extent than ever before. Who gets a gift, who gets away, but the big banks which can afford to and should be paying more, especially given the huge profits they've made over the last two years?

Property taxpayers right across the province are going to get dumped on. It was interesting that the mayor of Sudbury was here this afternoon, because he said last week to the media that municipalities are forced to go after their taxpayers for money in order to finance Mike Harris's provincial tax break. It's going to make people poorer and poorer because we're taking so much money out of their pockets when someone else is providing a tax cut. This is all about —

**The Deputy Speaker:** Thank you. Your time has expired.

**Mr R. Gary Stewart (Peterborough):** I was moved as well by what my colleague from Welland-Thorold said, moved by the fact that he's talking about taxes and these two groups have raised taxes 65 times over the last number of years. Please do not talk about tax hikes.

It's my understanding that in Welland they were reassessed in 1996 at 1992 values, and certainly the effects will be nominal, if anything. But he kept talking about seniors and how they would lose their homes and wouldn't have any place to go. I believe that's scare tactics. I believe it's fearmongering. I also suggest to you

that the seniors will have the opportunity of being sheltered. There will be deferrals. There will be phase-ins. There will be different tax rates set by the municipalities so that they have autonomy for their own operations.

I believe that if you look at Bill 106, it is a very fair bill. If you look at some of the words in there, they're talking about fairness, they're talking about current values. If you look at municipalities of 18 or 19 townships, whatever it might be, there are some variations in them of assessment, from 1950 up to probably 1992. Is that fair? I don't believe it is. If we're going to have fairness, it must be across the board. Why we would assess something differently than what you can get for the piece of property when you sell it is beyond my comprehension. It is good, common sense. I believe that this bill is most fair and will be all across Ontario.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Thank you. The member for Welland-Thorold, you have two minutes.

**Mr Kormos:** Beating up on seniors and retirees and people on fixed pensions, that's not common sense, it's just plain stupid. Let's talk about real folks. You want to talk about seniors? Let's talk about Kay Bray. She worked a lifetime for the Welland Tribune, worked hard, manual labour, never made a lot of money at all and didn't have anything of a pension when she retired. She raised four kids, all of them good people. She's living in Sunset Haven now. She made the best of her life with what God gave her. She had a lot of faith in God, no faith in this government. I tell you, I'm fearful for Kay Bray and others like her, because if Niagara region is forced to shut down Sunset Haven or any of its other seniors' homes, Kay Bray won't have a place to live.

My friend here may want to talk about how somebody will take care of them. No, I'm sorry. The Kay Brays don't belong in church basements and hostels. The Kay Brays of our society have worked too hard and given too much to their community to end up on the street pushing shopping carts, living on top of TTC grates.

I'm fearful; you bet your boots I am. I'm fearful for our seniors, I'm fearful for our retirees, I'm fearful for our young kids. It's their future that's being denied them. It's their future that's being crushed. It's their future that's being devastated as this government attacks the public assets and the public resources that our parents and those before them worked for and sacrificed for. Darn it, they paid for them. I'm fearful for seniors. I'm fearful for the increasing levels of poverty this government is creating among old folks and retirees. I'm fearful for the old folks who are living right up to their modest pension incomes and who are going to be forced out of their homes if this Bill 106 infects communities like it has some already. I am afraid; others should be too.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Further debate?

**Mr Galt:** It's certainly a pleasure for me to comment on Bill 106, respecting the financing of local government, after years of broken promises and false starts by previous governments. We've had report after report and study after study saying that we should be moving in a direction of better assessment, actual value assessment. Market value had been promoted earlier. Even the previous government agreed that this was a good idea but failed to implement it. Ontario is finally going to get property tax



reform, and it's a reform that's going to be fair to all citizens in the province of Ontario.

I remember just a few minutes ago the member for Windsor-Sandwich — it's unfortunate that she left — was concerned about the amount of dollars this government is using to inform the public about our programs. Hopefully she can find out about this comment later, the fact that we will hardly reach the \$8-million mark if we try real hard. The previous government doubled that, and their government back in the 1980s, on the average year, tripled that figure, so I think she should be very careful in her comments about the budget this government has for informing the public about our activities.

I also bring to attention the comments of a few minutes ago about the seniors and the disadvantaged being hard-pressed by the change to AVA. With this assessment, local municipalities have up to eight years to bring into effect the full actual value assessment, and if the local municipality is interested in protecting seniors and the disadvantaged — and I know they are — they'll certainly take advantage of this.

Ontario's antiquated system for assessing property values is unfair, inconsistent and just about impossible to understand; I know because I've tried. Bill 106 will finally give Ontarians a fair and equitable system that is indeed transparent to the taxpayer. It will eliminate wide variations in tax burden within similar municipalities and it will address long-standing concerns of property owners across this province. Those changes are long overdue.

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I say that I've tried to understand the system, because there is a property tax situation in the northeast corner of my home riding of Northumberland that defies explanation. It seems that after several years of steeply rising property taxes that were completely out of step with other municipalities, citizens of the town of Campbellford were about ready to stage a tax revolt.

Not too long after the election the town councillors came to see if I could seek a solution. That was the beginning, I'm afraid, of a long and arduous investigation. Accusations flew. Some said it was the adoption of market value assessment a while back that caused taxes to skyrocket. Others blamed it on rising local school board levies. Still others said the increases were due to equalization factors mandated by the province. But nobody knew for sure.

My executive assistant at the time was a mathematician with two degrees from highly reputable institutions. He studied the problem from every angle and still did not find the solution. So we decided to call in the cavalry. We called in the ministry people, we called the people from finance and we called people from education. We called representatives from the local school board. We called them in front of the town auditors and we called them from the regional assessment office. We had them all sit down together in the same room, and guess what? We still could not arrive at a definitive explanation. No one could tell us why Campbellford's property taxes for education were so much higher than anyone else's.

More recently I've had a couple of sessions with Peter Wright from the Ministry of Education, and I think I'm starting to understand what the problem is. Campbellford

was faced with a mill rate 50% higher than adjoining municipalities. They are at market value assessment in the county. Two adjoining jurisdictions, Hastings county and Prince Edward, were also at market value. But Campbellford was 50% higher than these other municipalities and its education tax requisition had been steadily climbing since 1994, through 1995, through 1996.

Part of the problem relates to this whole assessment area. Some municipalities in my riding were assessed back in the early 1940s, almost 60 years prior to the assessment in Campbellford. Campbellford is pegged on the 1992 assessment, and 1996 was the first year they actually used market value assessment to set their tax rate.

To further complicate that — and I hope somebody can follow this because it is very complicated — every year there are equalization factors brought to bear to try to bring the 1940 assessments, the 1950 assessments and so on to a common level. Once they get them to a common level then they can come up with the amount of the mill rate that will be charged to each one of these municipalities.

To further complicate that, it's benchmarked every four years: 1988, 1992 and 1996. The one in connection with Campbellford was benchmarked 1992 but it didn't affect the taxes until the year 1994, and at that point in time there was a significant increase in Campbellford's taxes. Some of that increase relates to the relative assessment, and since our school board includes Clarington, which is getting into the greater Toronto area, their relative assessment per home dropped in the recession while Campbellford's sat still.

Because they relatively dropped in value and dropped in spite of some of the development there — still the total dropped — the end result was that Campbellford, because they were relatively stable and holding their own, ended up with a higher relative assessment based on the Clarington area. The end result was that their requisition went up and it steadily went up during a recessionary time — a supercomplicated thing to sort out. That's only part of it and very simplistic, but the end result is we are taking education tax off residents in 1998 and no longer will communities like Campbellford be caught in this kind of very-difficult-to-understand quagmire. The charges for the Campbellford area will depend totally on the services they receive in that community.

It was a real shocker, truly a case for all the king's horses and all the king's men. The property tax system was an unfair, indecipherable mess. That is not what I consider good government, although previous governments over the last 10 years have been very tolerant of this situation. That is why this bill is long overdue.

I believe Bill 106 will allow us to wipe up that mess, the mess left by governments that have gone before us. It will bring consistent valuations and clear principles to the property tax system and, above all, it will bring fairness back to property owners. With Bill 106, people across the province will be able to understand how their assessment is calculated. They will know that it is always up to date and that it reflects current property values, and they will know they are not paying too much, but instead are paying their fair share. We are all willing to pay our



fair share, and that is all anyone is asking for with this bill. I'm indeed proud that this government is trying to make sure that happens.

While I'm on the subject of fairness, I'd like to address another provision of the bill: the removal of the business occupancy tax. The report of the GTA task force identified the BOT as a key area that discriminates against business owners.

It's interesting to note some of these acronyms. Business occupancy tax, the acronym BOT — as a veterinarian, I find that's usually a grub that's found in the stomach of horses and it's a fly that lays eggs on their legs. It's interesting to see it show up here as an acronym.

**Interjection:** Quite a metaphor.

**Mr Galt:** Yes, isn't it, though.

This has the effect of driving business and investments out of Ontario, and that is a situation this government has set out to turn around. We are not talking about a trivial amount of money here. Depending on where you live in the province, the business occupancy tax rate varies from 25% to 75% of the realty tax. The average is about 40%. That can add up to many thousands of dollars a year for a small business owner. In fact, in 1995 a survey by the Canadian Federation of Independent Business found that when commercial assessments are measured as a percentage of estimated property value, those property owners paid double the rate of tax, compared with residential properties. The business occupancy tax represents a large proportion of that discrepancy, and under Bill 106 it will be gone.

Those are the kinds of changes we have to make if we are to bring jobs and investment back to Ontario. If we are to give people renewed hope and opportunity, Bill 106 will help us to do just that.

Bill 106 also addresses a question of fairness for residential taxpayers. For many years in Ontario it has been possible to own a home that is of equal size, condition and value to a home across the street and yet pay twice the property taxes. This problem is particularly acute in Metropolitan Toronto. A resident, for example, of Scarborough may be paying \$3,000 a year in property tax while a neighbour living across the street in Toronto pays only \$1,500 for a similar home. This is a situation that has been crying out for attention, yet no government has acted to resolve the situation. Bill 106 will certainly change that too.

As we all know, the problem stems from out-of-date tax assessments, some of which haven't been updated since the 1940s — some, as I referred to, in my riding and also certainly the Toronto area goes back to the early 1940s. As the Minister of Finance has pointed out on numerous occasions, when assessments no longer reflect the present value of a home, the distribution of taxes is unfair.

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Under the Fair Municipal Finance Act, we're making sure that property taxes in Ontario are fair. We are ensuring that all properties in Ontario are valued in the same year and we are making sure that home and business owners know what to expect when they buy into a new area.

We recognize that the changes will cause some increases in areas such as Toronto. To avoid any undue hardships when the new assessments come into effect, municipal governments will be given the flexibility to make the change in a way that is sensitive to local needs. For instance, under Bill 106, seniors and disabled people can be protected from sudden shifts in property tax assessments until a house is sold. That too is only fair.

Although it's not part of this bill, we're taking education taxes off the residential property taxes as well. That means local taxes will be tied more directly to local services. That has been a request that people have been making for the last couple of decades, particularly our seniors. Combined with the changes we are proposing under Bill 106, the removal of the education tax means taxpayers will be able to see what they are getting for their hard-earned tax dollars. They will have a better idea of how their property taxes are being spent.

I have always believed that the purest form of democracy can be found at the municipal level. Under the new system, local decision-makers will have more control but will also be more accountable to the people who foot the bill. That too is a major aim of this government. At the same time, the property tax assessment system will be simplified. Property owners have a right to know and understand how their property taxes are assessed. Bill 106 will give them that ability.

Bill 106 will also eliminate the farm tax rebate in favour of lower and more uniform assessment for farm and woodlot owners. Farm operators in my riding and across Ontario have been asking for this change for a long time. The reason is simple: The cumbersome system of asking farmers to pay excess property tax and then asking them to apply for a 75% rebate makes no sense.

This actually came in back in the early 1970s, about two and a half decades ago, when we recognized that farmers were being treated unfairly because of the high education tax on their property. In 1993, farmers became very, very nervous when they found that the tax rebate for managed forests had been eliminated and they thought they would be the next in line. We, as a very responsible campaign, committed to the farmers and to those managing the forests and indicated that we would ensure that it stayed in place and that we would replace the managed forest rebate. I'm very pleased that last spring we did return the managed forest rebate and now we're bringing them in so that the mill rate will be essentially 25% of the standard that would otherwise have been set, recognizing the need for the farmers and recognizing the conservation need for the managed forest rebate. It is a prime example of the red tape and needless bureaucracy that was built into every nook and cranny of Ontario's property tax system. This system was costing farmers time and money in needless interest charges. That is unacceptable to a government which supports the important work of farmers in this province.

I am also pleased to note that the eligible managed forests will also be assigned to this new farm class. As with the farm tax rebate, this change will end the red tape that woodlot owners had to endure for a partial tax rebate.



Bill 106 will also exempt conservation lands from property tax. This change will help to protect Ontario's environmentally sensitive areas, and as parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Environment, I can heartily endorse this conservation move.

All of these changes have one thing in common: They are designed to bring greater fairness to provincial taxpayers and address long-standing inequities in Ontario's property tax system.

In closing, I'd like to point out that Friedrich Engels once said, "An ounce of action is worth a pound of theory." I believe the time has come to end the theorizing about property tax reform. We must take action and get on with the job, and that indeed is why I'm pleased to support Bill 106 today.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Questions or comments?

**Mr Gerretsen:** First of all, I think the people of Ontario should understand that all we're doing in the total reassessment of the properties in the various categories and within the various municipalities is shifting the tax burden within that municipality, and presumably the legislation is intended to be revenue-neutral as far as individual municipalities are concerned.

Having said that, let's then look at the downloading that this government is doing. These are municipal figures. These haven't been put together by partisan acts. They have been put together by the treasurers of the province of Ontario. They have looked at their own individual municipalities, and as a result of the actual shifting tax burden, these are the results.

In the city of Kingston, I've always given the figure of \$23 million that will have to be raised as a result of the downloading. Well, I was wrong. At the hearings that we held this past Friday, we heard it was actually \$29.3 million that the residents in the city of Kingston will have to come up with as a result of the shifting of tax burdens that you're imposing on the people of Ontario. In Brantford it's \$23 million. This morning the mayor from London was on CBC Radio and it was over \$50 million that the taxpayers of London will have to raise as a result of your downloading on that particular municipality. Cornwall, \$10 million; Thunder Bay, \$15 million. I could go on and on and on.

Yes, we want a fair system; there's no question about it. People should be assessed fairly, but there should also be a fair distribution of the cost of government between the province and the municipalities, and you're not doing that.

We all know you're taking \$5.4 billion in education tax off the property tax roll, but you're adding on \$6.3 billion, which includes the \$120 million for the property assessment services that are talked about in this particular act, as well as the \$165 million in farm tax rebates —

**The Deputy Speaker:** Thank you. Your time has expired.

**Ms Martel:** I want to say to the member from Northumberland, can he explain to me what is fair? He mentioned the word "fair" several times. What is fair about the fact that property tax owners in my community are going to pay more in property taxes directly as a result of actions your government is taking?

When I look at the business occupancy tax, the fact of the matter is that the variable rates were put in place because there was a perception that some businesses were in a position to pay more than others. That is why you have retail outlets, for example, that are taxed at a rate of about 30% and you have banks, for example, that are taxed at a rate of about 75% of the assessed value of the property. When you eliminate that tax, it means that municipalities are going to have to try and recoup that revenue somehow. They can't live without it given all of the downloading you are placing on them.

What you will see happen is an increase in property taxes for many of the small commercial and retail outlets to make up that difference, while the banks, the same folks raking in record profits across this country right now, are going to end up paying less. Tell me how that is fair for the small mom-and-pop operators who are going to get a whopping hit on their property tax as a result.

In the regional municipality of Sudbury, with the downloading that your government is going to do, regional taxpayers will pay \$105 million more as a net cost. When you take away the education component and you download all the services that you are, we will pay \$105 million more. That's a huge hit for property taxpayers across the regional municipality of Sudbury. Tell me how people on fixed incomes, small families, mom-and-pop stores are going to be able to afford that. What's fair about that?

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**Mr Allan K. McLean (Simcoe East):** I just want to take a couple of minutes that I have here, first to compliment the member for Northumberland on his remarks in the House today on Bill 106, An Act respecting the financing of local government. For some time the municipalities and a lot of people were concerned with regard to the market value assessment. Some municipalities, some counties, went for it; some didn't. Some still don't have it today. I think today Bill 106 will probably straighten out the mess that we have had for many years.

Under the changes made by the bill, the assessment of land will be based on its current value. I think that's only fair. When we look at the bill and we also look at what has happened in the past, taxes in some areas will go up and taxes in some areas will go down. I always felt that the people whose taxes were going down should be the ones who were the most concerned about it because they've been paying that extra for years and years, and the ones that are going up are the ones who should have been paying more.

The other good thing about this bill is the business assessment. The bill eliminates business assessment by repealing the current section 7. When we talk about what's happening here, the municipal property taxes, the current municipalities levy a tax based against commercial assessment at a rate equal to 85% of that basic rate against residential and farm assessment. This bill is making it so much different that farm land, conservation land, will be paying 25% of what the land is assessed at.

We also have the deferral of the taxes for the seniors, who need the deferrals, and the low-income people and



the people who are disabled. There are things within this legislation that will help those people out.

Also, with regard to the pipelines, railways and utilities' rights of way, the municipalities will be provided with a method to pay for it.

**Mr Michael Brown:** I was very interested in the comments of the member for Northumberland, but I was particularly interested in his comments surrounding agricultural land, forest land and conservation land. I think we all know in rural municipalities that we have to raise so much money for local services. Even if — which is a big "if" — the amount of money necessary would be the same, I have one particular township where 46% of the land is assessed as agricultural. They have just lost 75% of that 46%. You do the math, but the amount of assessment has just dropped significantly within that municipality.

They obviously have to raise the same amount of money. It has to be raised. The bills have to be paid. The roads have to be plowed. That's what has to happen, yet the amount of assessment has gone down. What does that mean? The mill rate will have to go up. The money that used to come from the provincial taxpayer to look after farmers and their interests no longer is going to come from the provincial taxpayer; it is going to come from themselves and their neighbours down the line. That's where it's going to come from.

I'd like the member, whether you're talking about the forest tax rebate or the agricultural rebate and your new system, to explain to me how farmers aren't going to pay considerably more money in taxes than they do now.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The member for Northumberland, you have two minutes.

**Mr Galt:** First, thanks to the member for Simcoe East for his kind comments.

In reference to the member for Kingston and The Islands, I think it's rather ironic to hear a Liberal concerned about a tax increase. During their term they increased their budget by double. It actually doubled during the short five years. They increased taxes some 32 times. I think it's really refreshing to hear a Liberal worrying about a tax increase. It's such a change to hear that. I think as a government we have finally won the battle and we have them worried about tax increases, and it warms my heart to hear those kinds of comments coming from a Liberal.

The member for Sudbury East was talking about fairness. I can't think of anything more fair than a property of equal assessment you're going to pay equal taxes on. To me that's just about as fair as you can get. The assessments will all have the same basis across the province. Even after their fair tax system report came in —

**Mr Kormos:** User fees for old people, user fees for kids, user fees for single mothers, user fees for sick people.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Member for Welland-Thorold.

**Mr Galt:** — they were afraid to implement this. We at least have enough intestinal fortitude to bring this in.

**Mr Kormos:** Tell us about the user fees.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The member for Welland-Thorold.

**Mr Galt:** When she talked about being fair, I would ask the member for Sudbury East —

**Mr Kormos:** Tax breaks for the banks.

**Ms Martel:** The banks are going to pay less.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order. The member for Welland-Thorold and also the member for Sudbury East, would you please remain quiet? The member for Northumberland.

**Mr Galt:** Thank you, Mr Speaker. They also increased taxes some 33 times. Was that fair? You talk about being fair when the average 25-year-old today, to pay that debt, it will cost them \$290,000 during their lifetime because of the kind of debts that you increased.

**Mr Kormos:** Tell us about the user fees. How many new user fees? Come clean.

*Interjections.*

**The Deputy Speaker:** The member for Welland-Thorold, the member for Sudbury East, we have measures that we can take to prevent you from shouting. Please don't push me to that wall.

Further debate?

**Mr Mike Colle (Oakwood):** This Bill 106 is another part of the megacity, mega-dumping, mega-downloading package. We've seen the Trojan Horse of the megacity come into Metro. We've also seen the downloading of welfare, family benefits, long-term health care, child care, all on the property taxpayers of Metropolitan Toronto and the rest of the province. This is another part of that downloading package of the megacity mega-week fallout.

What they're trying to do in the confusion, in the smoke, they are basically downloading their responsibilities on to the property taxpayers. This is the other shoe. As someone said, they thought the other shoe was going to drop but they didn't realize the government was a centipede. There are so many shoes dropping on Metro especially, this is going to be devastating. It is another devastating blow to the property taxpayers who in many cases are seniors on fixed incomes or have small businesses. In the middle of all the confusion of the downloading, they're also asked to absorb a new tax system. Everybody from the board of trade to David Crombie is asking what this will mean to this city. How is it going to work? What will the tax bill be? What will the services be?

When the public asks, what will the tax bill be — and I know the member for Northumberland says the public has a right to know. I asked the Minister of Finance, I asked the Minister of Municipal Affairs, I said, "Give us your impact studies," the neighbourhood-by-neighbourhood studies they have done. They've gone through the Annex, they've gone through Leaside, they've gone through Mimico and they have been doing some studies to show what the new taxes would be on the houses and businesses.

As members of the Legislature, we've asked for those studies the government has done with taxpayers' dollars. When municipalities have asked for their individual studies, you know what the government says? "You can't have the studies." In fact here's what they say. This is from the Information and Privacy Commissioner of Ontario. This is a notice of inquiry. He said, "The ministry confirms that the three impact studies withheld



are part of a cabinet submission, the record at issue which contains all existing source data for the Golden report.”

They had these studies which would blow the lid off this bill, because in those three studies that the government is hiding from the public you would see what the tax increases would be on your house or your business. So the public goes to the Ministry of Finance, goes to municipal affairs, and says, “Can I see what the taxes would be like on my house with your new Bill 106?” and the government has the gall to say, “This is none of your business; it’s cabinet secrecy.” These are tax rolls.

If the government were truly going to do something that would benefit people, don’t you think it would release these studies, put them on the front page of the Toronto Star and say, “Look, your taxes are going to decrease”? But the government knows if it were to release these house-by-house, business-by-business studies of what would happen to their taxes with this new form of market value, the public would be even more up in arms than they are today because of the downloading, because these studies would detail the massive increases in property taxes on top of the downloading.

1730

As you know, in Metro the average house will see an increase of over \$400 because of the downloading of this government, because of the downloading of welfare, downloading of family benefits, downloading of social housing. It’s a double impact on Metro especially because of the fact that downloading hits Metro hardest because we have a disproportionate number of people on social assistance, we have an elderly population, we have a lot of social housing, over 100,000 units here in Metro.

On top of that downloading impact, this government is going to download market value assessment, which it said it would never do. That’s what it is. They’ve got a different letter for it every day of the week, but that’s what it is, it’s market value assessment. You can imagine the impact it’s going to have on the Metro economy when you’re going to get the downloading that’s going to put social services on to the property taxes.

I asked Wendell Cox, the famous US consultant on cities: “Is anybody else in the western world downloading social services on property taxes? Is anybody else downloading housing, downloading long-term care?” He said: “No. This is primitive. Not even in Third World countries are they doing this.”

This government is asking taxpayers, and tenants through their rent, to pay for not only social services but this new tax scheme that it has the gall not to release the information on. I challenge taxpayers all across Ontario, especially those in Metropolitan Toronto, to tell the government, “If it’s so good, why won’t you make the figures public?” As they said in the movie Jerry Maguire, “Show me the money.” They should be saying that to Mike Harris, “Show me the money.” They should be saying that to Minister Leach, “Show me the money.” They should be asking Ernie Eves, “Show me the money.”

If this market value system is so good, why are they hiding the figures? Why are they saying they’re secret cabinet documents? These are tax rolls. Going up and down the streets in the Annex, up and down the streets in Guildwood Village, up and down the streets throughout

Metro, they’ve got these studies. If this is such a good system, why are they hiding the studies? Why can’t the public, who are paying for the studies through their tax dollars, and they’re going to have to pay what the new property tax is going to be, the new bill, why can’t they be shown the studies? As Jerry Maguire said, “Show me the money.”

For a democratically elected government to withhold that kind of information is appalling, because we’re not talking about state secrets, about spy rendezvous with the North Koreans, we’re talking about property tax bills.

As a member of the Legislature, when I ask for these property tax impact studies, they say it’s secret, the public can’t get it. You know they’re hiding these studies because when the people all over Metro and the province see what it means to their taxes, the whole lid will blow off this mega-week nonsense, this mega-downloading nonsense. Now we have mega-value assessment on top of it. All done in secrecy, without any detailed — no business impact. They’re going to dramatically change the tax system in Ontario overnight, and they don’t have the decency to release the impact studies they’ve done.

**Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines):** What are they doing in committee? Who are they having as witnesses?

**Mr Colle:** Today they were so desperate to bring in people to make deputations before the megacity committee they had to drag out the Premier’s ex-chauffeur to come in and tell us how great the megacity was. This is how desperate this government is that basically bulldozes, confuses the facts for people who want to know what their taxes are going to be.

The other thing that’s most concerning is the seniors. In Metro Toronto we have a lot of seniors because we have excellent hospitals — not for long, it seems; they’re going to close about a dozen hospitals any day now. We have good public transportation, we have good libraries, we have local shopping, so a lot of seniors live in and move to Toronto. A lot of them have been able to keep their own homes. We’ve got a lot of 80-year-old seniors who still own their own homes. They’re not causing the government any grief; they’re not asking for any help from the government. All they want to do is keep their little bungalow, their little home in Long Branch or Leaside or East York. They say, “Just leave me alone.”

What’s happening to that poor senior on a fixed income, on a meagre pension? This government has downloaded social welfare programs, family benefits, social housing on to this poor senior’s property tax. On top of that, they’re going to put in market value assessment with this Bill 106. You can imagine what that senior’s going to be thinking of: paying their hydro bill, their water bill, their telephone bill. Now the government’s going to give them this new tax system and the downloading of social services on their property tax.

Then the government says, “We’ve got this great plan where municipalities can defer your payment of your tax bill.” Municipalities have tried this scheme before. Seniors don’t buy it. North York has tried it; the city of York has tried it. Seniors who have worked their whole life trying to get the mortgage off their property don’t want Mike Harris and Al Leach and Ernie Eves to put a new mortgage on their homes. That’s what 106 is doing.



It's saying to seniors, "You don't have to pay the 40% in taxation; just defer it."

Here's a senior couple who have worked for maybe 30 or 40 years at some moderately paying jobs, getting rid of all their debts. So when they reach about 80 years of age, you've got this Bill 106, the market value bill, saying: "Oh, you don't have to pay that. You can defer it, in essence put a lien on your property."

In the past, very few seniors have ever taken that up, because they know they don't want to be in debt. That's what Mike Harris, with his mega-dumping and mega-downloading, is doing. He's going to impose debts and mortgages on all the property taxpayers of Metropolitan Toronto. That's what this is. It's a huge mega-mortgage, simple as that. That's what this bill is going to do.

It does nothing to help the seniors who have been paying their taxes their whole life, who have kept their homes clean and tidy. Travel through the neighbourhoods of Metropolitan Toronto and you'll see these clean and tidy neighbourhoods, in many cases that seniors have built themselves and have kept up because of their sense of civic pride. Now you've got this uncertainty of the market value system coming in on top of the downloading.

We know that downloading is going to mean an average of about \$400 per household in Metro. Those are Metro figures: \$400 on top of each homeowner, and tenants through their rent. The board of trade said that downloading would mean about \$8,000 per business. That's \$8,000 extra, and the homeowner another \$400, on average. Some homeowners will pay much more; I guess some a little less. So along with downloading extra property tax, you are going to see another direct hit on the property taxpayers of Metropolitan Toronto.

This market value scheme, which this government in the previous election went door to door saying they wouldn't implement — they said they would not do it, they were against — what do they do? They're implementing market value assessment, the exact opposite of what they said they were going to do in the election. If any Tory had gone door to door saying they were going to support market value, they would have been thrown out on the street, but now, through the confusion, through the smoke of mega-week, what are they doing? They're implementing not only the downloading, wiping out local government, but on top of that they're sneaking in market value assessment.

They think people won't notice, but I'll tell you, people in the Annex have noticed, people in Leaside have noticed, people in the city of York have noticed, people up the Yonge Street corridor in Willowdale have noticed. This is going to be a property tax explosion that they're going to pin on the Tories, because as much as the Tories try to use their propaganda on television, people are smart. They will notice that this is nothing but a pure smokescreen for the disastrous downloading of taxes and responsibilities on the property taxpayers. This is what it's all about.

1740

It's interesting to note that they always refer to the fact that all these property tax appeals have taken place, that Metro has never been reassessed. They never mention

that over 400,000 properties in Metro have been appealed in the last number of years; in other words, almost half the properties in Metro have gone through an appeal process. Half of the properties have been reassessed; they've been updated. Do you know who's left to get hit with this market value bill? Basically people who would have an increase, because a majority of people who would get a decrease have already appealed successfully and that money has gone back into their pockets. The taxpayers in Metro who own homes have appealed their taxes and got the money back. It's in their pockets and they've been spending it.

The government doesn't admit that, but that's what's happened, because people have had the right to appeal and they've appealed in cities across Metro.

This is up to 1995 figures: 85,000 properties in Etobicoke have already been appealed; 33,000 properties in the city of York have been appealed; 355,000 properties in the city of Toronto have been appealed; 134,000 properties in Scarborough have been appealed; 25,000 in East York; 129,000 in the city of North York. In other words, these citizens, on their own initiative, have basically appealed their property taxes and got a reduction. Not all of them got a reduction, but a vast majority of them got a reduction, so they're up to the 1992 values already.

You know who's left out there. There are people who looked at the tax rolls and knew their tax would go up. They haven't appealed. The vast majority of people out there who haven't appealed are going to get a whacking tax increase because of this bill. All there's left out there are people who are going to lose, because most of the appeals have already gone through in the commercial and residential sector. That is what is pending for residents all over Metro, huge tax increases, very few tax decreases.

It's interesting how specific the minister was. Earlier this year — I told you about asking. As a member of the Legislature, I asked for the impact studies on house-per-house tax increases.

The minister says in the Toronto Sun, July 5 last year: "Leach estimates about 50% of city of Toronto residents will see a decrease in their" property "taxes, while about 30% will receive an increase of less than \$250 annually and the remaining 20% would be hit with increases of...40%."

Even the minister admits there are going to be 20% hit with up to a 40% increase in Toronto alone, and it's not just Toronto. I know people outside Toronto think it's just Toronto that's going to get a tax increase. There are going to be a lot of areas in Scarborough that are going to see a tax increase with this new market value system; a lot of areas of Etobicoke will see a tax increase; in the city of York they'll see a tax increase; and in North York, so it's not just Toronto.

I know the members on the government side say Toronto is going to see an increase, but the increases are going to be right across Metro and they are going to be up to 40% in many cases. How are these property tax owners, or tenants through their rent, going to afford to pay for this impact? That is why the government, when asked to release the information, when asked to show us the money, says it's a secret cabinet document. You know why they say it's a secret cabinet document?



Because if they released those impact studies, house by house and neighbourhood by neighbourhood, the people of North York, the people of Etobicoke would see that this market value system is going to be the double whammy on their property taxes, along with the downloading of welfare.

That's why Anne Golden said you can't do both at the same time. You can't bring in market value assessment and downloading at the same time. It's a recipe for disaster. It's going to create hardship on business and it's going to create hardship on homeowners. These are people who have invested in their homes and businesses. It's not just coping with one thing. It's not just coping with the downloading, which, as I said, is something being done nowhere else in the western world, the downloading of social services, the downloading of long-term health care, nursing home care. As they close the 12 hospitals in Toronto to pay for that 30% tax cut, there's going to be even a greater demand on home care. How are we going to pay for the home care? Through your property tax.

This is what the pending legislation is going to do, what the mega-week, mega-dumping, mega-downloading, mega-market-value taxation are going to do to people. It's going to put more pressures on the services they need and at the same increase their property taxes up to 40%. That's why they won't release the studies, because the public will not stand for it. They hope, through their propaganda machine, they can hide it in the smoke. As I said, there are people waking up to this agenda. They realize that this government is not just about talking about changing political boundaries; it's talking about changing the political landscape.

As a speaker said today in the hearings, they're taking us back to the 1930s, when people went bankrupt because of the Depression. They couldn't provide services. That's what they're going to do with this downloading. That's what they're going to do with this market value system, which is going to hit especially hard in cities like Toronto.

In talking to Paul Pagnuelo of the Canadian Taxpayers Federation, he said that this scheme, this market value, AVA system is going to impact right across Ontario. It's incumbent on taxpayers all across Ontario to ask for the numbers. They should be asking their MPPs, "Show me the money." The government has the figures on what this market value system will mean to their neighbourhoods, to their cities and towns.

Once you see those figures, which I think the government eventually will have to release — the impact is just too great for it to keep them secret. Once they release those impact studies on what it's going to do to the property taxpayers across Ontario, the people will not stand for it. They won't be fooled by the propaganda and the spinning. That is at the heart of this issue: The government thinks it can sneak this in, in the confusion about downloading, in the confusion about amalgamation. That's why they did it all together in this package, the megacity package — 103, 104, 105, 106 — that with all the dumping, people will not notice. But the people are noticing all across Ontario.

The other interesting unknown in this is the business occupancy tax. In Metro it accounts for about \$600 million. If that \$600 million is no longer available to the municipalities, where are they going to get that \$600 million? Will they increase residential taxes more? Will they increase other commercial taxes? That's another \$600-million question for the people of Metro and maybe up to another half a billion or so outside of Metro.

1750

These are all the unknowns and these are all the things that are frightening people about the rush on these bills. You know why they're rushing them. You know why they're bulldozing them. Can you imagine a government that would push forward so many dramatic changes in such a short period of time and not even release the business plan? The Globe and Mail reported, on the front page, that they were about \$900 million off. They said that the downloading would be a wash; \$900 million off. By the way, to whose favour? Some \$900 million more dumped on the property taxpayer so the province can look good. A \$900-million addition mistake?

This is how this whole thing was concocted, as David Crombie said, on the back of an envelope. They're risking the economy of this province, the economy of cities like Metropolitan Toronto, by jamming and rushing this agenda through, without a business plan, without the numbers, without the impact studies. They have nothing to prove or to demonstrate what the impacts will be.

As you know, this is all to go in by January 1, 1998. Where are the assessors? Who is going to be doing this assessment? What kind of assessment are they going to do? Are they going to sit behind their computer and do these assessments? They have to visit a million properties in Metro. How are they going to fairly assess a million properties? I think they've got four or five months to do it. How is that going to be fair? How many appeals are there going to be?

These are the questions about this whole scheme they're introducing. I don't know what they're calling it now. Last week it was fair or actual. But it is a scheme that is, again, rushed and jammed through because they think the people will not notice and understand because of all the confusion. That's why they're doing all those television ads. That's why every time you turn on the television there's an ad from the PC Party paid for by taxpayers' dollars. They're hoping to confuse and confound people. That's what this is all about.

They're trying to rush through this agenda which is basically going to download and dump provincial responsibilities on to property taxes and at the same time essentially gut these services, because they know property taxpayers won't be able to afford it. What's going to happen to long-term care if it's on the property tax? What's going to happen to nursing homes? What's going to happen to 100,000 affordable housing units in Metropolitan Toronto that will be paid for out of their property taxes? Many of them need new plumbing, new wiring, new structural work. These are going to be downloaded on to the property taxpayer; child care costs, family benefits, family benefits for the disabled and single-parent families which have never been on the property tax before now on to the property taxpayer.



You can imagine when the next recession hits. People who are losing their jobs, whose income is declining, their taxes will go up because the welfare rates go up. It's especially acute in Metro where we have a disproportionate number of people who need assistance. We have a growing demographic trend towards more seniors. This is why the gap between the 905 and the 416 is going to be further accentuated by this mega-package mega-downloading.

Just to go back to my beginning, the public has a right to know. The public has a right to know what the impact studies show on their property taxes, what it means on their businesses, what it means on their homes, what it means to their neighbourhoods.

This government has those house-by-house property tax stats. They have that information; they are not divulging it. They say it's a confidential cabinet document, property tax roll figures. I shouldn't have to go to the privacy commissioner to find out what the tax impacts

are. That's where I have to go to get information. The government claims these are secret documents.

That is the message I like to give people and taxpayers: Before they accept the government propaganda on this new tax scheme, I ask them to force the government to release the figures, release the impact studies it has, which it keeps in the cabinet secret vault or whatever. Then we can have a good debate on this system, about whether it's good, whether it's fair. But right now the government has the information and is denying the public the right to see it. When someone denies you the right to see something, you know they're hiding something; if they weren't hiding something, they would make it public. If it's good news, release it; if it's bad news, you have the obligation to make it public because it's public information.

**The Deputy Speaker:** It being close to 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 1:30 of the clock tomorrow.

*The House adjourned at 1757.*



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No. 164

N° 164

ISSN 1180-2987

**Legislative Assembly  
of Ontario**

First Session, 36th Parliament

**Assemblée législative  
de l'Ontario**

Première session, 36<sup>e</sup> législature

**Official Report  
of Debates  
(Hansard)**

**Journal  
des débats  
(Hansard)**

**Tuesday 18 February 1997**

**Mardi 18 février 1997**



**Speaker**  
Honourable Chris Stockwell

**Président**  
L'honorable Chris Stockwell

**Clerk**  
Claude L. DesRosiers

**Greffier**  
Claude L. DesRosiers



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Published by the Legislative Assembly of Ontario



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Toronto ON M7A 1A2

Téléphone, 416-325-7400 ; télécopieur, 416-325-7430

Publié par l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario



# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 18 February 1997

# ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 18 février 1997

*The House met at 1331.  
Prayers.*

## MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

### HORMONE DE CROISSANCE

**M. Jean-Marc Lalonde (Prescott et Russell):** Je désire porter à l'attention du ministre de l'Agriculture et de tous les citoyens et citoyennes de l'Ontario les résultats d'une étude réalisée par le Cancer Prevention Coalition de Chicago concernant l'usage d'hormones de croissance sur les troupeaux laitiers. Cette étude, dont les résultats ont été publiés par l'International Journal of Health Services, démontre que l'usage de l'hormone somatotrophine, utilisée aux États-Unis pour augmenter la production laitière des troupeaux, augmente le risque de cancer chez les humains qui consomment du lait.

Nous avons au Canada le meilleur lait au monde. Les citoyens consomment du lait en toute quiétude, convaincus que le lait est un aliment qui contribue à leur bonne santé. Heureusement, l'usage de l'hormone de croissance n'est pas permis au Canada, mais je sais que le débat sur l'introduction de cette hormone sur le marché canadien est déjà lancé, et que nous aurons à prendre une décision tôt ou tard.

J'implore donc le ministre de l'Agriculture pour qu'il s'assure que des études poussées, comme celle réalisée aux États-Unis, seront effectuées en Ontario avant de permettre l'usage de cette hormone, afin de s'assurer que les producteurs laitiers de l'Ontario produiront toujours le meilleur lait au monde et que la qualité de cet aliment de première importance au sein de notre régime alimentaire ne sera jamais compromise au nom de la surproduction.

### EDUCATION LEGISLATION

**Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South):** I had the opportunity over the last number of weeks to work with a number of citizens within our community who are really concerned about what this government's agenda is vis-à-vis education. They look at Bill 104 and they wonder about bills that come after and really ask themselves: How will children and students fare in this new change that Mike Harris is trying to impose on education and children across this province?

They wonder, for example: How will students fare with the \$1 billion being cut from education? How will children fare when class sizes become so large that the teacher doesn't have adequate time and resources to be able to properly address the concerns of the students to make sure they get a good-quality education?

They wonder how students will fare when the government starts deciding which of the programs will be taken

away from the core curriculum. We know the government is musing that core curriculum should not include programs like phys ed and some of the reading programs we have through some of our libraries. They wonder how students will fare in that kind of atmosphere. They wonder how we as citizens and we as taxpayers and those supporters of school boards across Ontario will fare when the control of our school boards is taken away from our communities and put in the hands of Mike Harris and those at Queen's Park.

It seems to me that Harris ran in the last provincial election on the basis of creating government that is closer to the people and smaller government. People in our community look and see big, huge bureaucracies being controlled by school boards, and certainly not smaller government but larger.

### MARIPOSA SCHOOL OF SKATING

**Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Simcoe Centre):** I rise to congratulate members of Barrie's Mariposa School of Skating for their excellent performances at the recent Canadian figure skating championships in Vancouver.

Skaters from across the country and around the globe train with Mariposa, including the likes of Elvis Stojko and Jennifer Robinson. But Mariposa also trains a number of gifted athletes who are from the Barrie area, up-and-comers who we will no doubt hear more about in the future.

In the senior men's event, Barrie's very own Jeff Langdon brought home the silver medal and will go on to skate for Canada at the world championships. There was also gold in the junior dance for Barrie's Laura Currie and her partner Jeff Smith.

Several Barrie skaters had the honour of competing in the national championship, including Shaun Tilley, Kayla Gerritty, Tara and Jamie Schaack, Laura and Kim Currie and Megan Buttle.

Mariposa trains so many fine skaters that it is impossible for me to mention all of them today, but I would like to salute each and every one of them, including their parents who help make their dreams possible, their head coach Doug Leigh, and all the coaches and staff at the school. Simcoe is proud to have them as part of our community.

### DAY CARE

**Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre):** On behalf of the children, staff and parents of Centretown Parents Daycare, I'm delivering these Valentine's hearts to the Minister of Community and Social Services. Minister, these hearts do not represent support for your government's actions; they are broken hearts which convey



distress with the downloading and reduction of services taking place in Ontario. These hearts come to you from children aged two to five and come with a simple message: "Have a heart, invest in our children."

Families are justifiably concerned that your government's downloading exercise will jeopardize licensed child care programs throughout Ontario, and that the 50-50 municipal-provincial cost-sharing agreement will bring an end to the wage enhancement grant. The loss of this grant will lower the already substandard wages paid to service providers, thereby reducing the quality of service.

Overwhelming research tells us that if we can deliver quality programs to children in the early years, we reap the benefits in the later years through reduced social costs. Over the past 40 years, successive Ontario governments have understood this and have increased child care funding. Unfortunately, the current government has been blind to this fact. Parents and children who require child care services have yet to see any of the \$200 million that was to have been reinvested in child care. Instead, all they have seen is the elimination of funds, lost subsidies, centre closures, resource centre closures and a lowering of quality of service.

Minister, please listen to what the Centretown Parents Daycare and other child care groups are saying —

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Thank you very much.

#### EDUCATION LEGISLATION

**Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma):** As members know, the government is holding hearings on Bill 104, the bill to amalgamate school boards across the province. Those hearings are being held in the social development committee of this assembly. Already over 1,050 people have contacted the clerk of the committee to indicate interest in making presentations on the implications of Bill 104 for the future education of children in this province.

Because the government decided unilaterally to close down debate on Bill 104 and to pass a time allocation motion, there are only four days of hearings in Toronto and six days of hearings outside Toronto. There is no way the committee can accommodate the over 1,000 people who want to make presentations to the committee unless the committee agrees and the government agrees to extend the hearings.

Just before lunch I moved a motion in the committee to request the government House leader to amend the time allocation motion to allow for more hearings on Bill 104. The Liberal opposition supported my motion. Unfortunately, the government members on the committee unanimously voted against the motion, to limit debate, to prevent people from being heard on Bill 104. It's obvious that this government doesn't want to know what people think about education —

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Thank you.

1340

#### HERITAGE WEEK

**Mr Derwyn Shea (High Park-Swansea):** It is my honour, as the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation, to announce that once again it's time to celebrate Ontario Heritage Week.

We're fortunate to live in a province whose identity is firmly rooted in its rich heritage and its strong cultural traditions. The purpose of Heritage Week is to remind all of us that Ontario's heritage comes in many forms, from the tangible — our buildings and archaeological sites — to the intangible: our rites and rituals and even our stories. During Ontario Heritage Week, we are also reminded and called upon to celebrate with pride the richness and profound importance of Ontario's contribution to the national identity and the world community.

We are pleased the Legislature is sitting at this time so we have the opportunity to publicly recognize this celebration and especially to acknowledge those individuals who dedicate themselves to conserving and promoting our heritage. I applaud their contribution, particularly those who freely volunteer their time and resources.

I urge all Ontarians to participate in the wide variety of heritage events being offered in every community across this great province during our Heritage Week.

#### MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

**Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands):** Continuing frustration with the Conservative government is building across the province. In Kingston last Friday this frustration and anger bubbled over as more than 25 groups testified to the harm the Tory downloading of financial responsibility is doing to the taxpayers of our community.

The city of Kingston will be shortchanged \$28.6 million annually. This translates into an average increase in residential taxes of over \$540 per household and an average increase in commercial tax of 42%. It is clear that the transfer of education tax from the property tax roll and the dumping of social and health care on to municipalities will favour the province as, demographically, growth in the school-age population is much slower than the growth rate of the senior citizen population, which will require much larger expenditures in health care, long-term care and social services.

As Cathy Dunn, of the Providence Continuing Care Centre, stated, "Elderly and disabled individuals who require long-term-care services are affected not only by changes to the long-term-care service delivery sector, but also by fundamental changes to income assistance, social programs and public health."

Even the Greater Kingston Chamber of Commerce says, "Unless there are substantial changes made in the way commercial property is taxed, businesses stand to be the big losers from mega-week."

As so eloquently stated by Christine McMillan of the Council on Aging: "In our view Ontario is sitting on the wall, like Humpty-Dumpty. If these mega-week initiatives are not stopped, all the Queen's horses and all the Queen's" —

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Thank you. I'm sure it's a good quote, but it's not going to get recorded now.

#### EDUCATION LEGISLATION

**Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale):** A few days ago, some parents from my riding tried once again to talk to



the Minister of Education. They were immediately surrounded by police and once again kept from him.

In response to a media question about this, the minister said something like: The majority of people supported his reforms, and these few people who didn't support them and who supported the status quo had vested interests.

Yes, those parents do have vested interests, but I don't believe that's what the minister was trying to refer to. These parents do have a vested interest, and that vested interest is their children, their children's education and their children's future. I find it most alarming that the minister still believes — what kind of cocoon is he in, that he still believes it's just a few school trustees and maybe a few teachers out there who are afraid, he seems to be implying, of losing their jobs and that's all they care about. That isn't the fact either. Those teachers and trustees are also aware of the implications of these kinds of changes and the massive cuts that are going to hit the schools.

The minister clearly isn't listening. He has decided it's just a few vested interests who have concerns about this. This is not good enough. The minister has to start listening.

There is a meeting in my riding tonight at Withrow school. A lot of concerned parents who have vested interests will be there, and I invite the minister —

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Thank you.

#### SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

**Mr Allan K. McLean (Simcoe East):** I welcome this opportunity to inform my colleagues about how a couple of people in my riding are taking an enthusiastic approach to the government's workfare.

In giving herself a hand up, Gloria Earl of Orillia has founded the Welfare Society Fashion Houses of Canada. She is encouraging welfare recipients to become involved and learn how to knit for a commercial market. Gloria Earl is keen on making Ontario a close-knit family.

Another constituent is approaching the training aspect of helping out welfare recipients. Next month, Patty Maheu of Penetanguishene will be handing out graduation certificates to 109 students of her Computer Training Wheels school. Maheu's school has upgraded the skills of many people on welfare, giving them greater employment opportunities.

Both of these citizens of Simcoe East represent the true spirit of this government's challenge to break the cycle of welfare dependency. They are using their entrepreneurial skills to help themselves and others. I congratulate these two women, who have the foresight to seize an opportunity for themselves and offer support to their community at large.

#### GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** On a point of privilege, the member for Windsor-Sandwich.

**Mrs Sandra Papatello (Windsor-Sandwich):** Thank you, Mr Speaker. I hope you'll indulge me on this issue regarding the \$2.3-million ad campaign paid for by the taxpayers. I have two constituents who have submitted information to me that I'd like to pass on to you for your

review. One is the response to the Premier talking to us in a classroom, clearly a government ad, and this is the response package, which was sent on PC Party letterhead, if you could review that for its appropriateness. The second is a request which has been documented on CBC media in Windsor, if you could review the tape. It is the tape of the interview, which shows clearly the bias in terms of government taxpayers' ads and the response a constituent from Windsor-Sandwich received. If I could submit that to you, I'd like to have some ruling from you.

**The Speaker:** I'm looking for direction from the member for Windsor-Sandwich. I ruled on that ad yesterday in the Legislature.

*Interjection.*

**The Speaker:** I'm sure the member for Windsor-Sandwich is capable of answering the question, to the member for Kingston and The Islands.

I'm looking for direction from you as to what it is you're asking me to rule on and under what point of privilege.

**Mrs Papatello:** The issue here is that the taxpayers of Ontario expect that the government would spend taxpayers' money on issues that would be clearly non-partisan. In response to a government ad paid for by taxpayers' money, the receipt to my constituent was something issued on PC Party letterhead. Clearly this is in contravention of some rule which, in your knowledge, you'd find exactly where it's appropriate or not. My own sense is that it's highly inappropriate and I guess I'd like you to rule the same. The second is an issue that was brought up in the House, but because you didn't have the proof at the time — I now have the package received, if you could please review that for a ruling.

*Interjection.*

**The Speaker:** Yes, thank you very much. That's extremely helpful. I will undertake to report back to the Legislature after reviewing the information.

#### ORAL QUESTIONS

##### MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

**Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition):** My first question is for the Premier. On Saturday past I had the opportunity to join several thousands of people marching down Yonge Street protesting your megacity. I met along the way people from all walks of life and, in frankness, people from all political stripes. They came out on a cold February day and they left the warmth of their homes because they believe very strongly in something. They believe that your plans for reorganizing their communities are the wrong plans. They believe your plans are going to lead to an increase in taxes, they believe they're going to lead to a reduction in services, and they believe you're going to make government for them more distant, more remote.

Premier, this is an extremely important issue and I'm sure you recognize that. You are about to impose changes that will affect the way people in Metropolitan Toronto live for the next 50 years.



1350

Several weeks ago the city of Scarborough invited the three party leaders to a debate tonight in front of 2,000 people. I'll be there and Mr Hampton will be there. Premier, why won't you be there?

**Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier):** We are listening very carefully to all those people that you referenced on Saturday as well. Let me say that those you referenced on Saturday who are concerned about an increase in taxes, that's our concern too. We hear them and we're responding. We're concerned that property taxes have doubled over the last 10 years under the Liberals and the NDP.

Those who are concerned about a decrease in services, we're with them, we're responding. Those services that have declined over the last 10 years — the young boy yesterday was concerned about a class size of 37 — those are the kinds of changes that indeed we want to make.

Local governments want some decision-making close to them. We're listening to those concerns as well. That's why we have the local member speaking to Scarborough tonight, at the invitation of Scarborough council, I think.

**Mr McGuinty:** The Premier is clearly ducking this one. In some ways I don't blame him. If he attended he'd have to explain why he used to call local government "the best and most efficient government" and now he's killing it. If he attended, he'd have to tell the people of Scarborough how it is that their city, which runs the most efficient operation in Metropolitan Toronto — he'd have to tell them how his megacity can possibly benefit them. He'd have to tell them how a city of some 500,000 in size is going to benefit when it joins up with a city that's going to have, in total, 2.3 million people altogether.

You'd have to tell the people of Scarborough why it is that you said, when you attended before the Scarborough Metro East Chamber of Commerce on October 17, 1994 — this is what you said then, Premier; you'll recall, I'm sure — "Scarborough's fiscal efficiency is a model that should be followed by other levels of government." Now I didn't say "swallowed," I said "followed" by other levels of government.

Premier, you said Scarborough wasn't —

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Thank you, Premier.

**Hon Mr Harris:** I'm not sure whether that date was before Frank Faubert took over as mayor or not — I think it was, as I recall; you've gone back a few years. I think since I made that we have a new mayor, one who when he was a Liberal MPP, as correctly pointed out by one of my colleagues, supported the commercial concentration tax that cut the heart and soul right out of Toronto, and 33 other tax increases that were there. I might say that had the voters — they probably regret it now — voted for his opponent at that time, one Marilyn Mushinski, it probably would be a better-run municipality today than it is.

Having said all that, I might say that the people of Scarborough wanted a local representative to talk to them, so the Liberals are sending somebody from Ottawa, the NDP is sending somebody from Rainy River and we're sending that champion of local democracy, one of the local members from Scarborough.

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker:** Members for Kingston and The Islands, Ottawa Centre and Sudbury, please come to order. Final supplementary.

**Mr McGuinty:** Premier, I am attending the debate because I was invited to attend, and I think as a matter of courtesy and respect, I ought to attend. You were invited to attend and you're ducking it.

Let's be honest about this. You're losing the megacity battle and you know it. In fact one of the few people so far supporting the megacity at the public hearings was the Premier's former chauffeur. Apparently he's still taking directions from the Premier.

The pro-megacity group that has been haphazardly cobbled together — we've heard something about this — consists of real, grass-roots, non-aligned, impartial and objective types like, get this: Leslie Noble, former campaign manager; Tony Clement, parliamentary assistant; and Bob Harris, the party's former executive director.

Premier, let's call off the debate tonight. Let's, you and I, walk out of here right now, arm in arm, and we'll go out there and tell them you've made a mistake, you're withdrawing the bill, and that'll be the end of it. What do you say?

**Hon Mr Harris:** Obviously I would not agree with the member's assessment of the past 10 years under the Liberals and the NDP, that 1985 to 1995 record, versus the responsible government that the people all across the province are getting today.

But I would say this: We are listening very carefully to those who are making representations on one unified city, serving the same number of 2.2 million people but with fewer politicians and less bureaucracy but the same size. Some are expressing their viewpoints on how we can do things more efficiently and effectively under Who Does What in the future, and we take that very seriously.

For the people of Scarborough, Mr Gilchrist, who is a local Scarborough member, I think will quite ably handle himself in Scarborough versus somebody from Rainy River and somebody from Ottawa.

## HOSPITAL FINANCING

**Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition):** My next question is for the Minister of Health. Last week I raised the very disturbing story of a dying man's last days in a Sault Ste Marie hospital. His experience made it clear to me, and I hope to you, that your \$1.3 billion of cuts to Ontario hospitals are hurting patients.

Today I have a letter from a Mr Zukowski, who tells us of how he visited his uncle at an Ontario hospital here in Toronto a short while ago. His uncle was in hospital because he had to have eye surgery. He is 89 years of age. This is what he writes:

"Imagine our shock when we arrived that morning to see my uncle sitting naked in a chair, tied with a bedsheet, alone and shaking violently, his untouched breakfast, by now over an hour and a half old, sitting on the bed tray nearby. Medication was yet to be given and it was nearly 10 o'clock in the morning."

Minister, I want you to tell me again, I want you to tell Mr Zukowski and I want you to tell his uncle how it is that your cuts are not affecting patient care.



**Hon David Johnson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Minister of Health, Government House Leader):** I guess the member opposite knows I can't comment on any particular case other than when cases are raised to me directly, either outside the House or inside the House, cases which involve the people of Ontario. Obviously it causes me considerable concern and I am here to say on behalf of the government, on behalf of the Ministry of Health, that there are many health care professionals out there doing their best to provide excellent health care to the people of Ontario, and I take each individual case seriously.

What I will say again to the member opposite is this government has a plan, has a vision, to put the patients first in Ontario, to put the money where the patients need the services, in the front-line services. The plan that was initiated over a year ago was to focus on taking out the administrative costs, realizing savings and putting front-line services back into health care in Ontario.

**Mr McGuinty:** Minister, your vision for health care in Ontario tomorrow is doing nothing for patients who presently find themselves in our hospitals and in need of basic nursing care. Let's understand what we're talking about here. We have an 89-year-old man, naked, strapped to a chair, who is unfed, sitting exposed to the world, a man for whom we have a very special responsibility, a man who is entitled to quality health care, the kind that respects his dignity as a human being. He didn't get that in Ontario in 1997. Nurses confirmed to us this morning that cases of patients being restrained — that means tied up — are on the increase and that's because of staff shortages, for no other reason.

You talked about the importance of delivering care and that the staff are doing their best. Yes, but you're tying their hands. There are not enough of them. Minister, do you really think it's appropriate that frail, elderly patients —

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Thank you. Minister.

1400

**Hon David Johnson:** I am affected by each and every one of the stories that appear in the media and stories that are brought to my attention, and most concerned. But I will say that Ontario has a vision to reinvest back into front-line services. In fact we have announced reinvestment in long-term-care services, kidney dialysis, cardiac services and diabetes services across Ontario.

That view is not only shared by myself, but on the radio the other day there was a quote from a gentleman who said: "The Ontario government, from what I have seen, is committed to the principles of the Canada Health Act. They are trying to provide top-quality care to their citizens." The author of that quote was the Liberal federal Minister of Health, David Dingwall.

**Mr McGuinty:** Minister, you and your government have hacked \$1.3 billion out of Ontario hospitals. How can that not help but have some deleterious effects? How can it not help but hurt the quality of patient care?

Mr Zukowski's uncle has seen at first hand, experienced at first hand what this means. There was no one there to attend him because your cuts thus far have resulted in 3,400 registered nurses losing their jobs. When

you're done, your plans are to lay off 15,000 nurses in Ontario — 15,000 fewer nurses for patient care. We're talking about people being tied to their chairs, we're talking about others not being fed or others not having their diapers changed or others being discharged too early.

I've asked you before and I'm going to ask you again: How many more people, how many more patients in Ontario are going to have to suffer in our hospitals, not because of their illness but because of your cuts, before you realize that your cuts are hurting patient care?

**Hon David Johnson:** I think, first of all, we should get our facts straight. There is no plan to cut nurses in Ontario. In fact, through long-term-care reinvestments —

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker:** The member for Fort William, please come to order. Member for Ottawa West, come to order as well, please. Minister.

**Hon David Johnson:** Second, there has not been a reduction of \$1.3 billion to the hospitals. There have been some savings realized administratively, such as a reduced number of vice-presidents and middle managers etc. There has also been a reinvestment of some \$600 million —

**Mrs Elinor Caplan (Oriole):** They are cutting services.

**The Speaker:** Member for Oriole, you choose to ask the questions the way you like and the government can choose to answer them the way they like. Your heckling is out of order. Thank you. Minister.

**Hon David Johnson:** I try to answer them on a factual basis. I think that's the problem the opposition has.

This government is reinvesting in health care, reinvestments announced of over \$600 million. We have lived up to our commitment of at least \$17.4 billion in health care. What could we expect from a Liberal Party which reduced the number of hospital beds when they were in government by over 1,200 in the last two years of their term?

## ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY

**Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River):** My question is for the Premier. After your government has made huge cuts to the Ministry of Environment and has laid off hundreds of scientists, experts, inspectors and enforcers, we read today that the Minister of Environment has a legal problem. He is worried that our courts may find your government legally liable for regulatory negligence when someone is harmed as a result of all the cuts you've imposed on the environment, so now your government is busy drawing up confidential legal strategies in case it gets sued.

Premier, I've got a better idea for you: Why not stop the deregulation of our environment, the decimation of our environmental inspectors and enforcers and the demolition of the Ministry of Environment and Energy? Why won't you simply enforce the law that protects our environment?

**Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier):** I think the member is responding to an article in the paper that's factually incorrect. Given that, it makes his question factually incorrect.



If the member is suggesting that the Ministry of Environment, in trying to correct the disastrous environmental record of your government, in trying to do things more efficiently, in trying to actually set standards and enforce them, something you didn't have the courage to do on either air standards or water quality standards, bringing the environmental regulation into the 21st century, not the past, in doing these things I would acknowledge this: that starting in 1994, the Ministry of Environment had numerous directives that it should be setting priorities. That was under your government. That was one of the few things we agreed with, that they should be setting priorities in how they spend their time and their enforcement time. I think everybody has to set priorities. That's a logical exercise. We've asked them to go after the most serious offenders —

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Thank you. Supplementary.

**Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale):** This is clear evidence once again that your minister can no longer protect the environment. The Environmental Commissioner has already issued two urgent reports about that. Today there is yet again more clear evidence. Ms Willis, the ADM at the Ministry of Environment, wrote, "The layoffs will have an obvious impact on the amount of work we can accomplish."

She went on to say that the government could no longer provide the kinds of environmental services it used to. This is again more clear evidence, and you are still standing on your feet denying it. When are you going to listen to the environmentalists, the commissioner of the environment and now an assistant deputy minister at the Ministry of Environment? They're telling you that you've got a problem here.

**Hon Mr Harris:** I think I said 1994 when the priority-setting started in the ministry, but it was 1992. I just want to correct the record — same government, same administration. We thought that was logical. Let me give you some examples that Ms Willis is referring to, one who is very supportive of the new efforts of this government, by the way, in following through on those priorities.

Odours from manure-spreading during manure-spreading time in agricultural rural Ontario would not have as high a priority, for example, as dumping chemicals into a water source near the drinking water. Should both those calls come in at the same time, we would expect that the environmental officer would respond first to the true emergency and second to the environmental odours that would be a normal part of farm practices. That would be kind of the logical priority-setting you started in 1992 and we're very supportive of continuing today.

**Ms Churley:** Premier, I think you're an expert in manure-spreading around here. You are not listening to the facts here. Let me tell you what Ms Willis said further: She wanted the changes because of the large number of alterations being made to Ontario's environmental regulations by the Progressive Conservative government.

1410

In my riding there is even more evidence that your government is not protecting the environment. There is a public meeting tonight so that residents can learn about

health risks from dangerous chemicals called PAH in the soil in their backyards. This was discovered in testing in October 1995. The city of Toronto's health department was not informed until January 1997. It was kept secret, under wraps, and now a notice has gone out warning people not to let their children play in the backyards, not to eat vegetables from the backyards. This has been known by your ministry for a long time and only now is it coming to light. Premier, will you now admit that you don't have the resources to protect the environment and human health any more?

**Hon Mr Harris:** No, not at all. I would certainly not call setting priorities and following through on that exercise, setting tough new standards and enforcing them, at all a reflection. I understand that it's not likely that you are going to stand up and say: "Boy, the government's doing a good job. Let's adjourn and go home." I understand that and I understand your role. But when it comes to protecting the environment, this government not only takes a back seat to no one; we don't take a back seat to the disgraceful mess you left in this province.

#### CHILD POVERTY

**Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River):** My second question is for the Premier. Premier, you're creating an environmental deficit in this province. But I want to ask you about the federal budget, which is coming down later this afternoon. Among other measures, the federal Minister of Finance is expected to commit a sum of money to a new national child benefit to address child poverty. The speculation is that the federal government will provide somewhere between \$300 million and \$600 million, although we know that substantially more is required to make any impact on child poverty.

Ontario has not made a firm commitment to participating in a child benefit program. Yesterday your Minister of Community and Social Services said, "We're waiting to see what Ottawa invests." How much money must the federal government commit today to a national child benefit program in order for Ontario to say, "Yes, we'll be part of the plan"? Premier, what's your government's bottom line? How much does child poverty matter to your government?

**Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier):** I heard an interjection that suggested to me the Minister of Community and Social Services wished to answer this.

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** I did not hear that, but Minister of Community and Social Services.

**Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Community and Social Services):** What the honourable member is saying is simply inaccurate. This province, in conjunction with the other provinces and with Ottawa, has made a commitment to develop an integrated child benefit for people, for kids who are living in poverty in this country. I think it's probably going to be one of the most unprecedented federal-provincial initiatives I've seen in quite some time. For him to question this government's commitment to that I think is based on totally erroneous information.

**Mr Hampton:** I did not put words in this minister's mouth. She's quite capable of trapping herself with her



own mouth. She said yesterday, "We're waiting to see what Ottawa is prepared to invest," when she was asked for a firm commitment.

Here's the problem: This government has made an art of announcing new programs for children and then not doing anything. In the last provincial budget the finance minister said they'd be spending an additional \$40 million on child care and \$10 million on healthy start programs for expectant mothers and young children, and yet we find today, almost at the end of the fiscal year, despite these loud announcements, that none of this money has gone to children. The government has kept all the money.

We know that child poverty is getting worse in Ontario. So I would put the question again to the Premier, though he doesn't want to answer it. We want a commitment today, Premier. We want to know how much child poverty matters to your government. Will you say yes to participating in a national child benefit and press Ottawa and the other provinces to develop national standards?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** Perhaps if the member of the third party had bothered to read the press release we put out in conjunction with the other provinces and Ottawa, where we all committed to working to develop an integrated child benefit that would help children in low-income families; that would ensure there was an incentive built in for people to move off welfare into the workforce; that would not disadvantage those children currently on social assistance; and we also made a commitment that any moneys we would receive through Ottawa's options would be used to spend on other child programs that are needed in this province — perhaps if he would pay attention to what has been happening, which we've talked about in this House on many occasions, he would know that Ontario is very committed to making this work because we know we need to do a better job to help children who are trapped either in welfare or in low-income working families.

**Mr Hampton:** The only person who is avoiding things here is the Minister of Community and Social Services. I've asked her twice, what is the needed federal commitment and what is Ontario prepared to commit? You don't seem to want to deal with that. We want to know, how much does child poverty matter to your government? We've seen that you can make announcements. You've made all kinds of announcements in the last year, but then you hide away the money; you don't provide any of that money for children or children's programs. So we need a clear statement of intent and commitment.

Minister, will you make a promise today to the poor children of Ontario that any savings your government gets as a result of a national child benefit will be directly reinvested as additional spending, over and above current and planned expenditures, on income support for families, on healthy start programs, on child care, on child nutrition or on any other program designed to assist children and families in need? Will you make a commitment that you will take that money and spend it additionally and not hide it away like —

**The Speaker:** Thank you, leader. Minister.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** I've said before and I'll say again that if the member of the third party had bothered to pay

attention to statements I've made in this Legislature, to statements the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs has made in this Legislature and to the press release and the announcements that have been made, Ontario has been very clear in its commitment.

Unfortunately, one of the options we must deal with — we cannot make that decision as provinces until we have an understanding of where Ottawa is coming from. We have had experience with Ottawa in the past where they have made commitments about spending they were going to give the provinces and then that money never materialized. I'm sure the honourable member is not suggesting that we should run out and sign on something where we have not got the commitment from Ottawa.

I would also like to remind the honourable member that his colleague in British Columbia, who likes to talk about the child benefit they have done, who likes to talk about how well their children are doing — they're still getting less money in that province than they're getting in Ontario, so I don't think that our record needs to be questioned in the least, sir.

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker:** Well, this seems like the perfect time to introduce one of the guests we have in our gallery today. I'd like everyone's attention.

#### VISITOR

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** I'd like to inform the members of the Legislative Assembly that we have in the Speaker's gallery today Mr Mario Dumont, leader of Action démocratique du Québec, member of the National Assembly for the riding of Rivière-du-Loup. Welcome, sir.

#### HOSPITAL FINANCING

**Mr Gerard Kennedy (York South):** My question today goes to the Minister of Health. Last week the minister declined to admit that his ministry had made mistakes with the biggest part of its responsibility. We can draw a direct line between those responses last week and Mr Zukowski tied to his chair in a hospital in Toronto, not the only elderly person treated that way. Hospitals around the province — I can say with authority that over half these hospitals were given the wrong allocation by your ministry.

Today we learned that one of your members, the member for Simcoe East, has called his hospital and said: "We have made mistakes. We're going to give the money back."

You were given the opportunity in this House to admit that you're aware of those mistakes and are doing something about them within your ministry, and you declined to do so. I want to give you another chance today to tell us that you're aware of the \$23 million in extra cuts you've made to hospitals and tell those nurses who have to tie patients, tell those other people that they're going to get their money back and they can go ahead and operate with some certainty in the face of those monstrous cuts you're making them carry out.



1420

**Hon David Johnson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Minister of Health, Government House Leader):** What I did say, and I gave a commitment, was that this government would live up 100% to the funding to the hospitals it outlined over a year ago, and I reaffirm that commitment today. I also say that we will go above and beyond that because this government believes in reinvesting in services to patients. You will see more money flowing into the hospitals in various areas.

Second, I will say in addition that this government has corrected a long-term flaw in the formula for operating funds, which was present when the Liberals were in government, which was present when the NDP was in government, which withheld a payment to the hospitals for three weeks. We have corrected that situation so the hospitals will now get all the money they deserve in the fiscal year they deserve it.

**Mr Kennedy:** I have a memo here from the Deputy Minister of Health trying to claim that a correction is being made. But, Minister, it is you and your government that made this mistake. It didn't happen last year; it didn't happen the year before. It only happened this year. The question people have to ask is, was this deliberate?

Your ministry is in chaos. Your hospital cuts are a mess. You've been calling hospitals all week telling them there are changes in their allocation because you made mistakes. Your assistant deputy minister in charge of hospitals left last week, the same day I raised this issue. Suddenly he's gone. Minister, you are left, left to tell us and patients out there how the chaos taking place in your ministry, taking place for Mr Zukowski and for other patients across this province is going to be addressed. Will you confirm today that you're giving the money back to hospitals, that you made too deep a cut? Will you also tell us that you'll stop making the cuts overall? They can't be done —

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Thank you, member for York South. Minister.

**Hon David Johnson:** I will confirm once again that this government is reinvesting into hospitals, into services for patients, putting patients first. This government is carrying forward a process begun by the previous government seeking the advice of the people within their communities through the district health councils, looking to reinvest money wisely within their hospitals. I'll say once again that we have corrected a long-standing formula which was in place when you were in government, when the NDP was in government — check the record, sir — which withheld payments to hospitals for three weeks. We have corrected that situation so now hospitals get the money they deserve in the year they deserve it.

#### MINISTRY OF COMMUNITY AND SOCIAL SERVICES CONTRACT

**Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold):** I've got a question of the Minister of Community and Social Services. You've cut a deal with Andersen Consulting Ltd, which, along with Arthur Andersen, is part of the US-based, multinational Andersen worldwide organiza-

tion. Your computer systems and the systems in your offices may well need revision and addressing. The fact is that Andersen Consulting stands to make up to \$180 million out of this deal you've cut with them. Surely there are companies in Ontario, Ontario-based and Canadian-owned, that are capable of doing this same work. Why do you find it necessary to hire and cut a deal with an American-based multinational to do this work?

**Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Community and Social Services):** As the honourable member will know, it was his government that put out the notice of intent for this particular contract. Contrary to what he appears to be saying, we do believe in an open tender process. We also believe in choosing the company with the best experience and the best ability to deliver the savings in the program we need, the best quality at the best price.

**Mr Kormos:** Minister, you abandon jobless Canadian workers and Canadian and Ontario expertise in favour of an American company. I think we're starting to understand why. Surely you know that Andersen Consulting is a part of the company that was forced to pay out \$82 million in settlement as a result of its negligent audits up to and during the course of the savings and loans crisis in the United States, a crisis that cost American taxpayers billions of dollars.

This same company that has demonstrated its negligence has been hired by you to hack away at our welfare system. How can the people of Ontario have any confidence in you or in this company when it has demonstrated its incompetence and negligence and when you've demonstrated yours by cutting your deal with them?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** I guess I'm a little at a loss why the honourable member would wish to second-guess a decision his government had made when they recognized that to make the welfare system work better for people who need those services, to make the system work better for people who are paying for those services, we need an up-to-date computer technology system.

**Mr Kormos:** That's a lie and you know it. That's a bold-faced lie. You're in bed with —

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Member for Welland-Thorold, that is unparliamentary language. I would ask that you withdraw.

**Mr Kormos:** I withdraw. I maintain that she's in bed with these actors.

**The Speaker:** Member for Welland-Thorold, you only get an opportunity to withdraw or not withdraw. I don't want you to replace it with anything. It's just withdraw or don't withdraw. It's your option. Minister.

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** We explained this in the Legislature yesterday, but the honourable member obviously was not paying attention. We believe that any dollar wasted in administration, that any dollar we can pull out of inefficient processes is a dollar we can reinvest back in a front-line service.

The auditor has been clearly flagging the fact that the processes we have in this system need to be improved. Those communities that are signing on to workfare out there have indicated very clearly that better computer technology is what they need to do a good job. That's exactly what we are doing. We are bringing in good-quality technology to make improvements in the system



that take savings out of administration so we can protect those programs for people in need.

#### FEDERAL HEALTH SPENDING

**Mr Bert Johnson (Perth):** My question is to the minister responsible for seniors. The federal government is cutting \$2 billion over two years from its health care and social service costs in Ontario. Last week Ottawa talked about adding \$50 million for pilot projects for publicly funded home care and free prescription drugs. If the federal Liberals confirm in today's budget that \$50 million is going to health care, could the minister tell the House approximately how much money Ontarians can expect?

**Hon Cameron Jackson (Minister without Portfolio [Seniors Issues]):** At this point it might be premature to guess exactly how much might flow to Ontario with this trial balloon sent out by Ottawa, and there have been no official discussions with the Minister of Health. But if precedent and population trends are any indication, we could be looking at somewhere around \$18 million for the province.

I'd like to say, on behalf of our province and all the other provinces in Canada, we are delighted that the federal government is revisiting the health care envelope after they have cut \$7 billion over two years from all the provinces.

As you know, our government, in response to that, has strengthened its commitment. It has increased health care spending to the historically high level of \$17.7 billion, implemented long-term-care reforms that have been 10 years on hold by the previous governments, we've restored out-of-country coverage for seniors and we've introduced the most comprehensive flu immunization program in all of North America. That's the kind of solid commitment seniors are seeking and it's the kind of commitment seniors deserve.

**Mr Bert Johnson:** Ontario currently provides the Ontario drug benefit plan for seniors and welfare recipients at a cost of \$1.2 billion. We also increased the home care and community services budget to \$1.1 billion. Could the minister please tell me what the impact of these federal dollars for seniors would be?

**Hon Mr Jackson:** The member has asked an important question: What would this impact be on Ontario's seniors who, on average, are using about 27 prescriptions a year under the Ontario drug benefit plan? Clearly the new federal money being discussed out of Ottawa would be the equivalent of paying for the first 10 pills of their first prescription in an entire year. That's only 10 pills.

While the Mike Harris government has increased home care and community health care spending in this province to the tune of \$1.1 billion, that is \$3 million a day being spent on home care. That is the equivalent, with the new federal money, of only three days a year. That's all we're talking about from the federal government.

To put this in context, and the Globe and Mail has referred to this as a possible election ploy, it's clear to us that the amount Paul Martin wants to give to Ontario seniors and their drug plan will be less than the amount

Paul Martin gave Sheila Copps for the great Canadian flag giveaway.

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Come on. You wouldn't want to leave the Speaker in the unenviable position of declaring the flag as a prop. So I'd ask that it be put away.

1430

#### CASINO GAMBLING

**Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex South):** My question is for the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations. You and your government have really become addicted to sanctioned gambling with the announcement of some 44 permanent mini-casinos containing over 6,000 video slot machines that are going to be placed in neighbourhoods all across Ontario.

Minister, by referendum, have you asked those communities if they want all these slot machines in their backyards?

**Hon David H. Tsubouchi (Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations):** I am sure the honourable member as well as almost everyone in this House has heard from the charities in their own local areas. The real difficulty here is that from the three-day roving casinos the Liberal government of Mr Peterson introduced there is absolutely no accountability. We've heard from a lot of charities that after having a three-day Monte Carlo event, they often make nothing or are in the hole. I don't think that's right for the charities.

By introducing permanent charity gaming clubs, we introduce an element of accountability where charities will benefit. In fact, the charities' benefit from this will go from about \$10 million to \$12 million under the previous procedures up to about \$180 million. I think that's a boon to charities in this province. They're waiting for this.

**Mr Crozier:** Minister, I saw your mouth move but I didn't hear you answer the question. Do you know where the real boon is going to be? The real boon is going to be to this government because they're going to make a lot more out of it than the charities are going to make.

During the election campaign Mike Harris promised referenda for communities to decide whether or not they would get a casino. Your Premier used to be very interested in finding out what communities thought about gambling in their backyard. Now we have an announcement that you're simply going to put 6,000 video slot machines, the most addictive little machines, right in their backyards.

Minister, in light of the Premier's promise, will you give communities the option of whether they want these video slot machines in their backyard or will Coopers and Lybrand simply tell them they're going to be there?

**Hon Mr Tsubouchi:** I had the opportunity to speak to a number of mayors in some of the catchment areas that would be the beneficiaries. I must say many of them were delighted with the fact that they thought not only would this benefit their charities, this would benefit the employment situations in their own communities.

I'd like to point out as well that last year the Gaming Control Commission issued around 4,200 licences for the



three-day Monte Carlo. If you multiply 4,200 by three, you get about 12,600 gaming days. When you look at the number of gaming days that will come as a result of the permanent charity gaming clubs, it's pretty close to the same.

This does not look like a great increase in the amount of gaming going on in the province, but it indicates an increase in accountability to the charities.

**Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I've got a copy of the request for proposal dated October 20, 1995, that resulted in this government's deal with Andersen Consulting. Maybe the minister would like to stand up and correct her comments before she's assumed to have misled this House.

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** To the member for Welland-Thorold, that's just not a point of order. I see you're not shocked about that.

New question, member for Cochrane South.

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker:** I didn't know the wording as he was yelling, but I would ask the member for Welland-Thorold —

**Interjection:** That's not what he said.

**The Speaker:** I'm not certain that's what he said either, with all due respect, but I give the member the opportunity to withdraw the comment.

**Mr Kormos:** I didn't, Speaker. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** New question, member for Cochrane South.

### TRUCK SAFETY

**Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South):** My question is to the Minister of Transportation. Every year an average of 400 small vehicles run into the side and the rear of tractor-trailers because they're not able to see those vehicles at night as there's no reflective tape put on the side of those trailers.

Research has indicated that such tragedies can be largely avoided by retrofitting trucks with reflective tapes. As of 1996 there is a requirement that all new trucks have reflective tape installed on those that are being used within the province of Ontario. However, this does not apply to trucks that are already in service.

You would know, Minister, that there was an accident a couple of years ago where a young woman died, at age 35, because her vehicle drove into the side of a truck because it didn't have that reflective tape. As a result of that, a coroner's jury recommended that a requirement of reflective taping be used on all trailers travelling on Ontario roads to the same standard as required on new trailers.

My question is simply this: Are you prepared today to follow the jury's recommendation and mandate the retrofitting of reflective tape on all used trucks travelling on Ontario's roads?

**Hon Al Palladini (Minister of Transportation):** I want to thank the member for the question. I certainly concur and agree that we have to make sure our trucks on our highways are safe. I'm really happy to say that a lot of consultation has gone on with the industry and that reflective tape has been a major topic; as a matter of fact,

it's been at the very top since we started our think tank back in October 1995. I think we have made some progress. Target '97 is also taking a look at some of the other things we could implement. I want to assure the honourable member that striping all trucks is on our plate. It's something we're looking forward to making sure we accomplish here in Ontario.

**Mr Bisson:** I certainly hope we're able to see that concretely in legislation in this House.

I want to say that the Canadian Automobile Association has challenged all shippers to serve notice to their carriers that they will only ship their products on trucks that are fitted with this reflective tape. The particular campaign is called "No tape, no freight."

Will you, as the Minister of Transportation in Ontario, ask the Chair of Management Board to make sure that any shipping that is being done on behalf of the province only be done in vehicles that are using reflective tape?

**Hon Mr Palladini:** Really I do understand where the member is coming from, but I want to remind him that any new trailer that gets put on the road today has to have reflective tape; that is a mandatory thing. But I do understand what he is saying about going back and making sure all trailers are done.

I want to say that the shipping association in this province has been very cooperative in helping us to establish a good, safe highway system. I also want to say that the CAA has been constantly talking with my staff, including myself, to see how we can all work together and make sure that safety is practised in Ontario.

### MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

**Mr Dan Newman (Scarborough Centre):** My question today is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. For the past couple of weeks I've been sitting on the standing committee on general government hearing deputations on Bill 103, the City of Toronto Act. I, like all members on the government side of this committee, have been listening to what the deputants have had to say.

One of the accusations that has been thrown at our government is that if and when Bill 103 passes and the municipalities of Toronto become united, our government is going to take hundreds of millions of dollars of reserve funds from the municipalities and apply it to the provincial debt. Will the minister please comment on this accusation and inform this House as to the government's plan regarding these reserve funds?

**Hon Al Leach (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing):** I would like to thank the member for Scarborough Centre for the question. I know he has been at the hearings many hours and I really want to let him know that I appreciate his efforts in being there to hear all the deputants.

I'm pleased to have this opportunity to clarify in the House what is actually in the legislation regarding the reserve funds of the Metro municipalities. It clearly states that all the assets and liabilities the old municipalities had are vested in and become assets and liabilities of the new city. I've said on many occasions that the province has absolutely no intention of taking the reserve funds of the



Metro municipalities. Any reserve funds that belong to the municipalities before the merger will remain with the unified city of Toronto after the merger, and any individual who says the province is going to take the money is absolutely wrong.

1440

**Mr Newman:** I'm glad the minister has clarified that it is the House and that there will be no more wild accusations.

Could the minister please explain to the House and for my constituents in Scarborough Centre what the role of the board of trustees will be with respect to these reserve funds if and when Bill 103 finishes the legislative process?

**Hon Mr Leach:** Again I thank the member for the question. I'd be very happy to clarify the role of the board of trustees with regard to the reserve funds of the seven municipalities. The board of trustees will not be taking over the reserve funds accounts of the seven governments. The reserve funds will be transferred in their entirety to the new city. The role of the board of trustees is to provide protection of these reserve funds for the taxpayers of the seven municipalities. Our intent is to ensure that these new reserve funds are there for the taxpayers of the new unified city of Toronto. I hope that clarifies this issue once and for all.

#### ASSISTED HOUSING

**Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-Walkerville):** My question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Over the course of the last week we have discussed the cost of downloading social housing to municipalities from a macro perspective. We released numbers yesterday that we believe are accurate with respect to the cost to individual municipalities. Given the obvious impacts this move will have on the property tax base, do you expect that municipalities in this province will either raise rents in what were formerly Ontario Housing Corp units or do you expect they will sell them off and get out of the public housing business?

**Hon Al Leach (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing):** I thank the member from Windsor for his question. It's a very good question, because when this government carries out its proposals to take education off the property tax and carries out our other proposals to switch services with the municipalities, the taxpayers won't have to worry about a tax increase and renters won't have to worry about a rent increase. They'll be able to look forward to a decrease. After the transition period over the next couple of years, by about the year 2001, we fully expect the municipalities would be in a position to lower rents, because we're also going to fix up the property tax situation and property taxes as well should be able to be lowered.

**Mr Duncan:** The Minister of Housing does not understand what the government is doing. What the government is doing indirectly and in a most cowardly way is getting out of public housing entirely. What you are doing is keeping your Common Sense Revolution pledge to sell off public housing, to not provide public housing for the most needy people in this province, and you're

leaving the dirty work to municipalities because you know that your plans will raise property taxes or they'll have to get out of it altogether.

Minister, will you tell this House how property taxpayers can be expected to bear \$1.4 billion in costs? Will you tell this House now that you expect municipalities to get out of public housing and will you tell the House that you don't care about public housing because you don't care about the most poor and vulnerable in this society? You have no vision of housing. You're closing public housing. How do you expect us to have a public housing stock in this province? How do you expect that, Minister?

**Hon Mr Leach:** The member says that's a cowardly action. You know who wants to get out of the housing business, Mr Speaker? His Liberal cousins in Ottawa. The Liberals said, "We want to get out of the social housing business."

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Government members. Thank you.

*Interjection.*

**The Speaker:** Except the Minister of Education, who is being very good. Minister.

**Hon Mr Leach:** Both senior levels of government know and agree with the municipalities that the municipalities are far better equipped to administer and deliver social housing. Even the social housing providers in those municipalities know they are best prepared to do that and have asked for that responsibility. The member asks where they will get the money to do that. I assume they'll take it from the \$6 billion they save from having education taken off the property tax.

#### CAPITAL FUNDING FOR SCHOOLS

**Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River):** My question is for the Minister of Education and Training. In January the minister announced that the school construction moratorium was over and that \$650 million in much-needed school construction could go ahead. But then he created more confusion, confusion that is really bothering a lot of boards of education out there. Each school construction project has a provincial contribution and it also has a local contribution, and you've told boards of education to go out and borrow the money they need to pay for their local share.

The problem they have is, if they borrow this money and incur a debenture, under your Bill 104 they will no longer have the authority to tax. So they're wondering who will pay back these debentures. Minister, will your government be paying back these debentures and assuming the responsibility for the repayment of that local share down the road? That's the answer they need to hear from you.

**Hon John Snobelen (Minister of Education and Training):** I want to thank the leader of the third party —

*Interjections:* Boo.

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Order.

*Interjection:* We want to make him feel at home.

**The Speaker:** All right, you're out of order. Minister of Education.



**Hon Mr Snobelen:** Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. You were very eloquent in that rebuttal.

I want to thank the leader of the third party for the question. Yes, we did announce that there is going to be construction of new schools in Ontario. The province will live up to its commitment that we made. We made it very purposefully. We want to get the shovel in the ground this spring to build some of the schools that are necessary across this province and we will do that. Nothing that has happened from that announcement till now will delay the construction of those schools.

**Mr Hampton:** Minister, I hear what you're saying but I also hear what those boards are saying. For example, in my part of northwestern Ontario, the Atikokan board has a \$3.2-million project but they have a \$500,000 local share and they haven't been able to get anything from your ministry about how that \$500,000 local share is going to be covered.

Fort Frances-Rainy River board has a \$14.5-million construction project, a new high school multi-use facility. It has a local share of over \$3.2 million. They can't get an answer as to how the debenture's going to be paid down, so they can't begin. The Dryden Board of Education has a project. They can't get a firm answer. The Kenora Board of Education has \$5.8 million in projects with a \$2 million local share. They want to proceed.

These are much-needed schools. They want to proceed. They want an answer from your ministry. First, do they have the approval to sign the contracts; second, they want to know if they borrow this money which is needed to cover the local share in some cases, will you —

**The Speaker:** Thank you, leader. Minister.

**Hon Mr Snobelen:** I'm very pleased to have a chance to address the question here. I hope that the critic from the Liberal Party is also listening because I believe that the correct information needs to get out there. We have been in communication with school boards and we have told them the template by which to apply, and we will build those schools and the leader of the third party certainly has my assurances of that. It's our intention to build those schools and we will build them.

1450

## PETITIONS

### HOTEL DIEU HOSPITAL

**Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines):** I have an important petition made out to the government of Ontario. It reads as follows:

"Since the Hotel Dieu Hospital has played and continues to play a vital role in the delivery of health care services in St Catharines and the Niagara region;

"Since Hotel Dieu has modified its role over the years as part of a rationalization of medical services in St Catharines and has assumed the position of a regional health care facility in such areas as kidney dialysis and oncology;

"Since the Niagara region is experiencing underfunding in the health care field and requires more medical services and not fewer services;

"Since Niagara residents are required at present to travel outside of the Niagara region to receive many

specialized services that could be provided in city hospitals and thereby not require local patients to make difficult and inconvenient trips down our highways to other centres;

"Since the Niagara hospital restructuring committee used a Toronto consulting firm to develop its recommendations and was forced to take into account a cut of \$44 million in funding for Niagara hospitals when carrying out its study;

"Since the population of the Niagara region is older than that in most areas of the province and more elderly people tend to require more hospital services;

"We, the undersigned, request that the government of Ontario keep the election commitment of Premier Mike Harris not to close hospitals in our province, and we call upon the Premier to reject any recommendation to close Hotel Dieu Hospital in St Catharines."

I affix my signature as I am in full agreement with this petition.

## OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

**Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South):** I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It reads as follows:

"Whereas it is vital that occupational health and safety services provided to workers be conducted by organizations in which workers have faith; and

"Whereas the Workers' Health and Safety Centre and the occupational health clinics for Ontario workers have provided such services on behalf of workers for many years;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to oppose any attempt to erode the structure, services or funding of the Workers' Health and Safety Centre and the occupational health clinics for Ontario workers.

"Further, we, the undersigned, demand that the education and training of Ontario workers continue in its present form through the Workers' Health and Safety Centre and that professional and technical expertise and advice continue to be provided through the occupational health clinics for Ontario workers."

I signed that petition.

## SCHOOL BOARDS

**Mr Tom Froese (St Catharines-Brock):** I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the provincial government is planning to make significant changes to the delivery and governance of education in this province; and

"Whereas we as parents believe that school councils should play an important role in education, with clearly defined responsibilities limited to their particular school communities; and

"Whereas we, as ratepayers, are extremely disturbed that consideration is being given to abolish school boards and eliminate decision-making by locally elected representatives,

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario that the present structure of school boards within the province of Ontario continue to have a major role in governance of schools to deal with broad policies



as advocates for the students in their community, to provide cost-efficient educational services and to be directly accountable to the parents and local ratepayers."

It's signed by constituents in my riding.

### SCHOOL ATTENDANCE

**Mr David Ramsay (Timiskaming):** To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas section 30, subsection 5 of the Education Act provides for dispositions with regard to habitually absent students and therein makes reference to the Juvenile Delinquents Act of Canada; and

"Whereas reference to the Juvenile Delinquents Act has caused and continues to cause confusion throughout the courts of Ontario because of its interpretive nature; and

"Whereas different interpretations of the Juvenile Delinquents Act have caused and continue to cause inconsistent rulings throughout the courts of Ontario; and

"Whereas the inconsistent support and enforcement of the compulsory school attendance legislation threatens the very concept of compulsory school attendance;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

"To resolve this long-outstanding problem to the educational future of Ontario's youth and reinstate the government's support of compulsory school attendance by clarifying the existing legislative confusion, by the deletion of any reference to the Juvenile Delinquents Act and by a clear adoption of the remedies available under the Provincial Offences Act."

### OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

**Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre):** I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the Harris government has begun a process to open the Occupational Health and Safety Act of Ontario; and

"Whereas this act is the single most important piece of legislation for working people since it is designed to protect our lives, safety and health while at work and allow us to return home to our families in the same condition in which we left; and

"Whereas the government has made it clear that they intend to water down the act and weaken the rights of workers under the law, including the right to know, the right to participate and especially the right to refuse" unsafe work; and

"Whereas this government has already watered down proper training of certified committee members;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario not to alter the Occupational Health and Safety Act or erode the rights of workers any further and ensure strict enforcement of the legislation."

I add my name to theirs in support.

### HOSPITAL RESTRUCTURING

**Mrs Barbara Fisher (Bruce):** I'd like to present a petition this afternoon on behalf of the County of Bruce General Hospital and its alliance partners, Chesley, Durham and Kincardine. The petition reads as follows:

"We, the undersigned, realizing the importance of local accessible hospital and medical services, therefore petition the district health council, the Minister of Health and the restructuring commission to continue to provide comprehensive hospital services at the County of Bruce General Hospital as well as at the facilities of its alliance partners, Chesley, Durham and Kincardine."

I am pleased to affix my name to the top.

### COMMUNAUTÉ INTERGÉNÉRATION

**M. Gilles E. Morin (Carleton-Est):** À la législature de l'Ontario :

«Attendu que la fondation PACE 2000, organisme à but non lucratif, prévoit de construire une communauté intergénération résidentielle pour aînés et pour étudiants adultes sur le terrain directement au nord de l'Hôpital Montfort ;

«Attendu que les objectifs de la fondation PACE 2000 sont de promouvoir l'autonomie des aînés dans leur domicile et de favoriser l'insertion socio-professionnelle des jeunes, et que ces objectifs seront atteints avec l'appui du réseau intergénération qui favorise la complémentarité entre les âges ;

«Attendu que la congrégation des Filles de la Sagesse, l'Hôpital Montfort et la fondation PACE 2000 ont déposé ensemble le 26 janvier 1997 l'application pour changement de zonage du terrain de 21 acres, et que, au 28 janvier 1997, les autorisations n'ont toujours pas été accordées par la ville d'Ottawa ;

«Attendu que 510 signataires depuis mai 1996 ont demandé que le projet PACE 2000 soit réalisé dans les plus brefs délais ;

«Nous les soussignés demandons à la législature de l'Ontario ce qui suit :

«D'accorder la plus grande priorité aux accords municipaux et provinciaux nécessaires au développement du projet intergénération PACE 2000 sur le terrain situé directement au nord de l'Hôpital Montfort, et ce avant la mise en application prochaine de la nouvelle nomenclature de zonage de la ville d'Ottawa.»

J'y affixe ma signature.

### OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

**Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre):** "Whereas it is vital that occupational health and safety services provided to workers be conducted by organizations in which workers have faith; and

"Whereas the Workers' Health and Safety Centre and the occupational health clinics for Ontario workers have provided such services on behalf of workers for many years; and

"Whereas the centre and clinics have made a significant contribution to improvements in workplace health and safety and the reduction of injuries, illnesses and death caused by work;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to oppose any attempt to erode the structure, services or funding of the Workers' Health and Safety Centre and the occupational health clinics for Ontario workers.

"Further we, the undersigned, demand that the education and training of Ontario workers continue in its



present form through the Workers' Health and Safety Centre and that professional and technical expertise and advice continue to be provided through the occupational health clinics for Ontario workers."

I add my name to theirs.

#### MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

**Mr Dan Newman (Scarborough Centre):** I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the city of Scarborough is requiring individuals who want to participate in the mail-in referendum to provide their name, address and signature on the ballot; and

"Whereas this requirement is blatantly undemocratic and threatens the legitimacy of the democratic process; and

"Whereas the city of Scarborough makes no mention as to whether or not it will accept ballots from residents who wish to vote in confidence; and

"Whereas the question on the ballot itself is slanted towards the position of the city and cannot be viewed as a neutral question; and

"Whereas this uncertainty and undemocratic procedure make the entire process a great misuse of taxpayers' dollars and tarnish any results that will come out of the vote;

"Therefore, be it resolved that we, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario to:

"(1) Speak out against this undemocratic vote;

"(2) Disregard the results of the vote; and

"(3) Continue with the proposed unification of the municipalities into one unified city of Toronto."

1500

#### SCHOOL ATTENDANCE

**Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury):** To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas section 30, subsection (5) of the Education Act provides for dispositions with regard to habitually absent students and therein makes reference to the Juvenile Delinquents Act; and

"Whereas reference to the Juvenile Delinquents Act has caused and continues to cause confusion throughout the courts of Ontario because of its interpretive nature; and

"Whereas different interpretations of the Juvenile Delinquents Act have caused and continue to cause inconsistent rulings throughout the courts of Ontario; and

"Whereas the inconsistent support and enforcement of the compulsory school attendance legislation threatens the very concept of compulsory school attendance;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To resolve this long-outstanding problem to the educational future of Ontario's youth and reinstate the government's support of compulsory school attendance by clarifying the existing legislative confusion, by the deletion of any reference to the Juvenile Delinquents Act and by a clear adoption of the remedies available under the Provincial Offences Act."

Of course I affix my signature to this petition as I agree with it.

#### FINANCEMENT DE L'ÉDUCATION

**M<sup>me</sup> Shelley Martel (Sudbury-Est):** J'ai une pétition à l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario :

«Attendu que Mike Harris et John Snobelen avaient promis de ne pas apporter des coupures dans l'éducation au niveau de la salle de classe, et que depuis leur élection, le gouvernement Harris a sabré plus de 430 millions de dollars dans les budgets des conseils scolaires, ce qui représente près d'un milliard de dollars supprimé du secteur de l'éducation publique sur une base annuelle ; et

«Attendu que nos enfants ont déjà perdu 50 % du financement accordé à l'éducation spéciale, ainsi que les bibliothécaires et, dans certaines régions, les maternelles, et que de nombreuses écoles ont perdu leurs programmes de musique, et que le nombre d'élèves dans chaque classe a augmenté sensiblement — certaines écoles vont même perdre leurs autobus scolaires ; et

«Attendu que les parents à l'échelle de l'Ontario savent que la majorité des changements apportés au secteur de l'éducation ont pour but de supprimer un milliard de dollars des dépenses du gouvernement pour financer sa réduction d'impôts ; et

«Attendu que les parents savent que ces coupures affectent l'éducation dans les salles de classe et la qualité de l'éducation de leurs enfants ; et

«Attendu que les parents savent qu'ils n'ont pas été consultés ;

«Nous, soussignés, exhortons Mike Harris à cesser ces coupures qui affectent l'éducation et l'avenir de nos enfants.»

Cette pétition est signée par 31 personnes qui habitent la circonscription de Sudbury-Est. Je suis d'accord avec eux et j'y affixe ma signature.

#### DRIVER EXAMINATION CENTRES

**Mrs Barbara Fisher (Bruce):** I'd like to present a petition this afternoon on behalf of the Chamber of Commerce of Port Elgin, and the petition reads as follows:

"Petition for the return of the drivers' examiners to Port Elgin and the reinstatement of Port Elgin as a travel point for Ministry of Transportation examiners:

"We, the undersigned, strongly support:

"(1) The return of the Ministry of Transportation drivers' examiners to Port Elgin; and

"(2) The Port Elgin issuing office be reinstated as a travel point for the Ministry of Transportation.

"We see this as a need and a demand for students, seniors and those obtaining testing for special licences."

I am pleased to affix my name to the top.

#### NORTH YORK BRANSON HOSPITAL

**Mr Monte Kwinter (Wilson Heights):** I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the final report of the Metropolitan Toronto District Health Council hospital restructuring committee has recommended that North York Branson Hospital merge with York-Finch hospital; and

"Whereas this recommendation will remove emergency and inpatient services currently provided by North York Branson Hospital, which will seriously jeopardize medical care and the quality of health for the growing population



which the hospital serves, many being elderly people who in numerous cases require treatment for life-threatening medical conditions;

"We petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reject the recommendation contained within the final report of the Metropolitan Toronto District Health Council hospital restructuring committee as it pertains to North York Branson Hospital, so that it retains, at minimum, emergency and inpatient services."

I have affixed my signature.

### HOSPITAL RESTRUCTURING

**Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor-Sandwich):** I'm presenting a petition signed by over 2,000 people in Windsor. "To the Ministry of Health Care" is how they wrote it:

"We, the Windsor taxpayers, petition to keep our hospital rooms open and not to close entire floors due to a lack of funds from our government. With a population of 200,000 people and a new casino and other industry on its way, we as Windsor residents have a right to the same health care for our tax dollars as London, Toronto, and other cities in Ontario. Our city is growing and we feel very strongly to keep our hospital rooms open.

"We ask the ministry to take this matter seriously and respond by reopening all the closed floors of the hospitals and designate adequate funding for the nurses so that we may be taken care of as taxpayers. Allowing hundreds of empty beds to stay closed while people are put in hallways for numerous days is a disgrace.

"As you will see by the amount of signatures, this issue will not be forgotten, nor will it disappear. We want our hospital rooms open and ready to care for the sick."

### INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

#### EDUCATION AMENDMENT ACT, 1997

#### LOI DE 1997 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR L'ÉDUCATION

Mr Bartolucci moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 124, An Act to amend the Education Act respecting school attendance / Projet de loi 124, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'éducation en ce qui a trait à la fréquentation scolaire.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley):** Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

**Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury):** This bill is in response to the petitions that were read into the record today but also to ensure that school attendance certainly is mandatory for those students who wish to skip school. The proposed amendment is intended to clarify the law with respect to children who are habitually absent from school. Provision is made for a review process to be governed by regulations prior to taking court action.

### NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

**The Acting Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley):** Before we move to orders of the day, pursuant to standing order

34(a), the member for Downsview has given notice of her dissatisfaction with the answer to her question given by the Attorney General concerning plea bargaining. The matter will be debated today at 6 pm.

### ORDERS OF THE DAY

#### FAIR MUNICIPAL FINANCE ACT, 1997

#### LOI DE 1997 SUR LE FINANCEMENT ÉQUITABLE DES MUNICIPALITÉS

Resuming the adjourned debate on the motion for second reading of Bill 106, An Act respecting the financing of local government / Projet de loi 106, Loi concernant le financement des administrations locales.

**Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South):** I look forward to getting into some detail about this Bill 106, which is An Act respecting the financing of local government. More succinctly said, this is the bill that introduces MVA to the city of Toronto, as much as the government tries to hide from the fact. They are trying to tell the people of the city of Toronto and others that they are moving on a new tax system for Ontario, namely, for Toronto, called actual value assessment. In actual fact, when you look at this legislation, what you see is a government that's moving on introducing what basically is market value assessment for the city of Toronto.

I find that very ironic because I remember as a government member between 1990 and 1995 the debate in the city of Toronto around the whole issue of MVA. I remember clearly the position that was taken by the then third party, the Progressive Conservatives, here in the House and by their leader, one Mike Harris, as being very opposed to moving to market value assessment for the city of Toronto. I thought Mr Harris and the now government whip, Mr Turnbull, and others had made very eloquent arguments against introducing this tax system called market value to the city of Toronto because they were really worried about what it was going to mean to their community and what it was going to mean to the small businesses and the residents of their communities in and around the city of Toronto.

Madam Speaker, you remember that well because you were a member of a cabinet, a member of a government, which had made a decision not to move on market value because you recognized, and I think wisely so, as a cabinet minister of the day that if we went to market value in the city of Toronto, it would be really chaotic. People's taxes in the downtown core would skyrocket. The result of that would be higher taxes for both residences and businesses in the downtown area. It would mean an outmigration of people from the city into the suburbs across the GTA. You would not only see businesses fleeing the downtown core but you would also see residents because of a number of different issues.

1510

The government of the day, the Bob Rae government, I think made the right decision not to move on market value assessment. So we made that decision as a government and, as I say, I think it was a decision that was quite correct, not to move on MVA, because we recog-



nized as a government, an NDP government, that it would really be a detriment to the cities of Toronto, Scarborough, North York and others which would be adversely affected by moving to this particular tax system.

As I said, I remember quite well the position of the then Tory caucus. I find it ironic that here we are, less than three, four years after that debate, with Mike Harris now as the Premier of Ontario, who has moved his status from being the leader of the third party to the Premier, who introduces a bill called Bill 106, which is what? It's MVA in window dressing. That's all it is. It's not actual value assessment, because actual value assessment, quite frankly, is market value assessment. It's a bit of a different play on words.

Succinctly put, what's the difference between MVA and AVA? MVA is a market value assessment, just as you would think. Market value assessment means to say that when the assessors go out to assess a property, they look at your property not only from the context of the building, the structure and the property itself, but they look at how much that entire property is worth in regard to the market that it finds itself in. So if I have a building in one particular area of the city where the market dictates that it should, let's say, sell at \$200,000 with property and building, the taxes are reflected based on the market values of the particular building. Conversely, if I live in a different area of the city and the market dictates that the same building would be sold at, let's say, \$180,000, the taxes are applied on the market value; in other words, the \$180,000.

So yes, you have a difference in taxes. You have in one part of the city one building being taxed at a lower rate than in another part of the city. But I think you need to take a look at that. That's a form of equity, when you really look at it, because we're saying in the tax system, "Listen, if you can sell your building at \$200,000 and the person seven or 10 or 15 blocks over in another part of the city can sell it at \$180,000 because of the market, we'll reflect that on your taxes so that it balances out in the end." I think that's a fair way of approaching the assessment system.

But is that what actual value assessment does? Frankly, yes. Actual value assessment, in my view, is no different than market value assessment. Actual value assessment means to say that you will assess the building based on the actual value and you take into account the conditions of the market. The Minister of Housing and the Minister of Municipal Affairs, the same person, can stand all he wants in this House and pontificate to whatever degree he wants; he can't run away from the fact that MVA and AVA are the same system.

So now within the city of Toronto, once this bill is passed and the requirements under the statutes are followed, the residents of the city of Toronto are going to find themselves — you'll notice I'm saying "residents" and not "businesses," and I'll get to that point later. Residents in the city of Toronto who own homes are going to see their local property taxes go through the roof, literally, because you will now have a system of taxes that will be applied to the residents of the city of Toronto that is no different than MVA.

I find it quite ironic to boot that the now government whip, Mr. Turnbull, who was very opposed to MVA and very vociferous in his opposition, is not saying but a peep on this whole issue now that his government is moving on its version of MVA. So I find that quite disconcerting because I thought that the opposition third party of 1990 to 1995 were true to their convictions and what they said they would do if they ever formed the government. But I find that they are not at all a party of their word. They are really a party of image and a party that likes to spin things rather than trying to deal with the actual facts of the case.

What's even more sinister about this particular bill — "sinister" I think is a bit of a strong word. As a matter of fact, I think I'll take that back. What is really, I would say, unfair about this legislation is how taxes will be applied to different classes of properties within all the cities and all the towns and all the townships across Ontario. The government is moving in a direction that I think is very wrongheaded, and let me give you two specific areas that they are moving in, because I only have some 20 minutes to go through this.

One thing the government is doing is it's saying the government is going to remove what's called the business occupancy tax. Let's explain what that is. The business occupancy tax is a tax that is —

**Interjections:** A ripoff.

**Mr. Bisson:** I hear the government members calling it a ripoff. You're about to rip off the property taxpayers in this province, that's what you're about to do, and I agree with your comment.

The business occupancy tax is a tax that is charged to businesses above and beyond the assessment that is on the property. What they do when they do the assessment of the taxation is, they look currently at the property where the business is residing, they tax that property, and then in order to support the infrastructure of the downtown and support the infrastructure that the community provides to the business sector, there is an additional assessment that is charged to the businesses that are occupying those premises. That is why they call it the business occupancy tax. This government is going to eliminate the business occupancy tax. They're saying if you're a bank and you have premises in downtown Toronto, downtown Timmins or Sudbury, you will no longer have to pay the business occupancy tax.

I guess if you're the bank, I guess if you're the business that's being affected by that, at first you say to yourself, "That's a break; that means to say I've got to pay less taxes." The problem is, and this is important, that the municipalities across the province are going to have to find the revenue by which they're going to make up for the shortfall of the money they lost with the business occupancy tax, because we all know Mike Harris and his ministers are working very hard at downloading all of their responsibilities on to the municipalities of Ontario. They're transferring over wholesale services and the cost of those services on to the municipality, everything from transit services to homes for the aged to ambulance services. You name it, they're transferring it over the municipalities, and the municipalities are going to have to pay.



So while the Harris government is throwing all these services on to the municipality, along with the additional cost, he's saying to the municipalities, "We are going to remove the business occupancy tax." The municipality is sitting there and saying that in some cases that's 15% to 20% of the assessment base on the business community, depending how big the business community is in that particular community, so they're saying, "Okay, we're going to have to go and find the money somewhere else."

Normally what would you happen, you would think, is the council would say, "Okay, they removed the business occupancy tax, so what we will do is we will transfer over that assessment on to the building in which the business is occupied." In other words, if they remove the occupancy tax, some councils would decide, "Okay, we've lost the occupancy tax; we'll raise the assessment on property within the downtown core to make up the difference." So the businesses end up paying for it through their rent — because they're already paying for it, and I'll get back to that point in a second.

But the government is saying no. What's going to happen is the government is saying to the municipalities of this province: "You cannot transfer the cost of the business occupancy tax back on to those businesses through their rent. You're not going to be able to charge it back to the business through the property that they are renting." Instead they're saying, "Municipal councils in the province of Ontario, we want you either to cut services further, because you're losing revenue, or go and charge more taxes to the individual ratepayers in the community."

I don't know about you, Madam Speaker, but I would imagine that the residents in the riding of Riverdale who own property and their homes are not any richer than they are in the city of Timmins, and I would imagine that the residents of Riverdale, such as the residents of the city of Timmins, Matheson and Iroquois Falls, are already paying a prime amount of money in municipal taxation and really cannot afford and don't want to pay more municipal tax assessment. I'm afraid this bill is going to make that possible.

Those residents in your riding of Riverdale and in my communities of Timmins, Matheson and Iroquois Falls are going to see their municipal taxes on residences increased as a result of this bill, because the government is saying, "We're giving a tax break to the wealthy, a tax break to the banks and to the other businesses that are paying the business occupancy tax," and the municipalities will then offset that by raising the taxes to individuals who own homes within our community.

1520

That is the most cynical form of politics there is, because this government makes no bones about it: It clearly favours one sector of our economy. They clearly stand squarely behind Conrad Black. They stand squarely behind Mr Stronach. They stand squarely behind everybody in the business elite of this province and say, "We're going to give you a break and we're going to make things better for you," but at the expense of everybody else, at the expense of your community and at the expense of my community and of the hardworking people who make up 90% of who pays taxes in this province.

I say that is wrong. A government is elected to govern on behalf of all the citizens of the province, not a select few. If there's one thing that makes a lot of people angry in this province — increasingly angry, I should say — it is that they're starting to recognize this government stands for big business and no one else. If they're going to do a favour for somebody, if they're going to give a handout to big business, that's fine by them, but they're going to put the boots to the average working people in this province. They're going to step all over the small business sector of this province because they believe in big business.

The other thing they're doing which is quite interesting: I always believed that the government, the Tory party, that is, had a lot of support in rural Ontario. I think that's important. For years the Tories have benefited from that support in rural Ontario. One of the reasons is that previous Conservative governments have done fairly well by rural Ontario, and rural Ontario has done fairly well by the previous Tory governments. I would say they did well by the NDP government, probably better.

What they have done in this particular case is they've really started the slide of the Tory party in rural Ontario because they are eliminating something that I would have thought was unthinkable to do in Ontario. They have gone to the Minister of Agriculture, who stood up proudly in this House and talked about how they've eliminated the farm tax rebate program. They took great pride in doing that.

Let's explain what that's all about. What they're basically saying is that there is a program in place where for farms in areas that have to pay a fair amount of municipal tax assessment, the farmer is able to participate in a program by which he or she as a farmer is able to get back some of that money they pay in municipal assessment so they can offset the running of their farms, because farming is a very expensive business to be in.

Because farms have big tracts of land, they tend to get assessed fairly well by municipalities. They get caught in a municipal assessment. Governments of the past recognized it was a problem. The municipality needed the tax assessment to be able to pay services because if you own a farm out on rural route 2 in Blackmire township or wherever it might be, you still need to have a road to go there. The way the municipality pays for that road and does the snow-clearing and builds the bridge to get to your land is to charge municipal assessment. If they didn't charge on municipal assessment, you wouldn't have the road. It's as simple as that.

The government said some years ago, "The farmers can't afford the cost of those infrastructures, so we, the province of Ontario, will introduce a farm tax rebate program so that for municipalities that charge that assessment to their farmers, the farmers are able to get some of that money back through the farm tax rebate program." It was a very successful program.

The government has decided it's going to do away with that farm tax rebate. What they've done is that in true Harris style they have conducted what I think is one of the biggest smoke-and-mirror operations in the history of farming in Ontario. They said: "We're getting rid of the farm tax rebate program. But don't worry, be happy.



We're going to make sure that municipalities lower your municipal assessment on property and we're going to do things better and smarter. Rather than the government administering the farm tax rebate program and giving you that money back via a grant, we're going to tell the municipalities they have to reduce the assessment on your farm land."

I guess at first stroke that sort of makes sense to people. They sit there and they say: "Oh, yeah, that makes some sense, a little bit less administration. We can save some money. If it's done in that intent, maybe it makes some sense." The problem is, who's going to pay for this? The Minister of Agriculture is the one who's going to save the money. He's going to take that money as a savings directly to the Minister of Finance so the Minister of Finance can fund his phoney tax scheme.

But who's going to pay? It's going to be the municipal taxpayers, that's who's going to pay. What's happening is that by reducing the assessment on farm land, the municipal government has to make up the difference in assessment by raising taxes on the municipal ratepayers. The farmer's taxes on his or her house are going to go up on the residential assessment and the taxes on residential assessment throughout the municipality will go up as well.

The government stands there and says: "Boy, we're bright. We've eliminated the farm tax rebate and instead we've told the municipalities to lower the farming tax assessment." Come on. They have to give their heads a shake here. In the end people are starting to catch on that this is really smoke and mirrors.

On the one hand, yes, what all is happening is the government is getting rid of yet another expenditure. They're offloading the responsibilities of the farm community directly on to the municipal taxpayers. Municipal taxpayers have hit the wall; there's nowhere they can go. You might be able to get away in this day and age with a 1% or 2% tax increase at the municipal level, but to offset the kind of offloading this government's doing to municipalities is going to take in some cases — well, in most cases — a 40% to 50% tax increase above and beyond what we now pay in municipal taxes.

In the city of Timmins they've quantified this. The council of the city of Timmins under Mayor Power has sat down at the council table and asked the councillors and the department heads to take a look at the cost to the municipality of the city of Timmins: What are we losing in revenue by the government taking away revenue from us, first of all, in the tax assessment system, and how much additional expense do we have to incur as a result of the downloading?

It's unbelievable. It equals a 40% increase in municipal taxes. If the municipality of the city of Timmins wants to keep services at the same level they are now, with all the downloading the Harris government is doing on to that municipality, it's going to have to raise municipal taxes by some 40 per cent to offset the cost to residential taxpayers. I know the good citizens of Riverdale can't afford a 40% tax increase, Madam Speaker. I can sure tell you that the good citizens of the city of Timmins can't either.

People in our community are starting to wake up to that fact. I am just taken aback by how people are

starting to clue in really quickly about what the real Harris government agenda is. As I walk around the community — and I go to municipal events in and around the entire riding; I go into the malls and the downtown and various places where we meet the public in our day-to-day work as MPPs — I can literally not move without people stopping me and saying, "Gilles, my Lord, do you see what they've done now? My property taxes are going to go through the roof," or, "I'm going to lose my ambulance care," or, "I'm not going to have this; look at what these guys are doing."

As sure as I'm standing here the support the government has I believe is starting to slip big time, because people are finally starting to clue into what this government is doing, what it's doing by way of this bill and every other bill, and that is abdicating its responsibility as a provincial government. It's saying, "We, the Conservative government of Ontario that's responsible for governing this province will not take on these responsibilities."

In effect, these people don't believe in public services. The view of the Conservative Party is that public services should be very minimal when it comes to whatever services are being offered, but even better in their view, whatever's offered should be done by the private sector. They're downloading everything and this bill is one of the means by which they're going to go around to pay for some of that.

I couldn't let this opportunity go by without having a word on the northern support grant. I want to say clearly to the members on the other side of the aisle, I want to say in strong terms, that it took the north years to lobby the provincial government to come up with what is now called the northern support grant, so that municipalities across the north, which do not have the commercial and industrial assessment you have in the city of Toronto, would have a program by which to offset our tax system.

If we in northern Ontario had the kind of assessment you have in the city of Toronto when it comes to industry and business, big office tower buildings etc, we would have enough money within our own municipalities' value of property to assess to be able to operate the infrastructure of our communities, but we have long recognized that in our communities we're basically resource-based and we're not able to raise the amount of commercial-industrial assessment in our communities that you can in cities like Toronto and Hamilton and Windsor. What's worse in many cases like the city of Timmins, where is most of our industrial assessment? It's underground. You have mines in Timmins — some of these mines, like the old Hollinger mine or the current Kidd Creek mine, the underground workings of those mines are bigger than — my Lord, we could probably take all the mining underneath the city of Timmins and build a highway across Canada with it. That's how much mining has been done. But our assessment on these mines we're not able to get to because all their workings are underground. So the only thing we're able to assess are the mills and the shafts and the office buildings on the mine properties, which are minimal compared to what the actual workings are underground.

1530

The government set up the northern support grant back in 1974 or 1976; I've forgotten the exact year. The Bill



Davis government recognized that northern municipalities did not have the industrial, did not have the commercial assessment of southern Ontario, that we couldn't tax much of our assessment anyway because it was outside our municipal boundaries or it was underground and we couldn't tax it. So the government put in place the northern support grant so citizens in Timmins and Sudbury and Sault Ste Marie and Kapuskasing and Hearst and Iroquois Falls and Matheson were able to get a certain degree of equity when it came to services being offered by their municipalities so we can have sewers and water, so we can have our roads plowed, so we can have our roads paved, so we can build sidewalks. We're talking about basic services here; we're not talking about glitz.

On the basis of the assessment we have, quite frankly we don't have the money to pay for some of this. I can tell you about municipalities in northern Ontario that had at that point substandard sewer and water treatment facilities because they didn't have the assessment base to pay for it. So the government of the day recognized and put in place the northern support grant. I remember the day in the year that happened, back in the early 1970s, northerners and northern mayors and councillors were very pleased by what the provincial government had done. This government is turning its back on that.

What's worse, it's not only breaking a promise made when the Conservatives ran in the last election, it's also breaking a promise of the Premier that was made in this House less than a year ago. I remember last year when the Minister of Northern Development and Mines, the absentee minister as we call him in northern Ontario, was musing about cutting the northern support grant, I asked the question in this House to the finance minister and to the Premier, to which the response was that they were not going to touch the northern support grant, that no, they would not cut it.

When the Premier at the time was travelling to communities of Sault Ste Marie and Timmins doing fund-raisers so they could raise more money for the Tories in Ontario, he was rather embarrassed by the fact that his government, at the time that he was out there trying to raise funds in northern Ontario, was going to cut the northern support grant. So the Premier did the political thing: He made the promise. He said, "I'm not going to cut the northern support grant." He said it in Sault Ste Marie; he said it in front of Steve Butland and a crowd of people in the Sault and it was repeated again through one of your ministers here in the House.

I was told, "If the Premier said it's not going to be cut, it ain't going to be cut." We thought we had a victory. We thought, "Hey, right on, the government's done something right." I went back to my community and said, "We got the government to commit to the northern support grant," and I gave the government credit. But what do you do less than a year later? You forget that you made a promise. You made a promise prior to the last election, you made a promise during the last election and you made a promise after the last election, and what do you do? You break it.

The people of northern Ontario are not going to forget for two seconds. For this government to try to put itself

off as the government that kept its word, that does what it said it was going to do in the last election — poppycock. Not at all. This government, on almost all occasions, has tried to play the smoke-and-mirrors approach to politics, and in this particular case of the northern support grant, because the Premier was doing fund-raisers in northern Ontario, because the Premier and the Tory party wanted the dollars from northerners and northern businesses — at \$100 a plate, I might add — and were looking to raise dollars for his party, he said the politically expedient thing. He said, "I will not cut the northern support grant." You broke your promise.

**Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener):** That's questioning motivation.

**Mr Bisson:** I am questioning his motive.

**Mr Wettlaufer:** That's not parliamentary.

**Mr Bisson:** That's parliamentary. I question what you guys are doing because your government is about to destroy much of what we hold sacred in this province. I for one, as a New Democrat and as the member for Cochrane South, am not going to sit idly by as you guys tinker with the province to the point of putting citizens at risk. That is not something, in my view, that is acceptable to the people of this province. We have a tradition in this province of building on the best, of saying that we as a province will care for each other, that we will work together towards building a better and more prosperous Ontario, and I will not stand by to watch you people tinker with our present and, more dangerously, tinker with our future to the point of putting us in jeopardy.

We have people in this province who are at risk because they can't get into hospitals now because the waiting lists are getting large because of your cutbacks. We have people who have died because they can't get adequate health care services. We have people who have died because the highways of our province are not plowed half of the time in northern Ontario because your Minister of Transportation has cut the budget in the ministry for road clearance. We have people who have died driving those highways. I'm not going to sit by and let you guys get away with it unscathed.

I think the story has to be told. People are telling me across this province, as I travel around as the transport critic for the New Democratic Party, that they're increasingly starting to figure out what this government is doing. So when it comes to Bill 106, the government can stand all it wants and try to say that it is doing something that is somehow fair and equal. There's nothing fair and equal in transferring taxes from the business sector on to residential ratepayers. There is nothing fair about giving a decrease in taxes to the Bank of Montreal, the Royal Bank and others that have made record profits, in the billions of dollars, and giving Granny Smith an increase in her property taxes. I say that is not only wrong, that is not only —

*Interjection.*

**Mr Bisson:** I think there's some chirping next door, Madam Speaker. I always know when a speech is having an effect: when the government listens and heckles. It tells us they're listening to what we're saying and they're starting to feel uncomfortable. I can certainly tell there are members in this House on the government side who



are plenty uncomfortable about what I'm saying, because they know what I'm saying is true and they're hearing it back home. The citizens in their municipalities within their ridings are going to them and saying, "I'm concerned about what you're doing." Sure, you got elected as a government to make some decisions in this province, but you didn't get elected to be able to —

**Mr Wettlaufer:** Why don't you tell the teachers —

**Mr Bisson:** You don't like teachers. We know that. You hate teachers. You can't stand teachers. Why don't you say it? Listen to this guy.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley):** Order, please.

**Mr Bisson:** Boy, I'll tell you, I've never seen a gang like this to get worked up. They can't stand teachers, they can't stand unionized workers, they don't like anybody who stands for anything that's progressive. All they can do is try to blame everything on a certain class of society. My, my, Madam Speaker, it is certainly telling to watch what they're doing.

So I say to the government across the way, I certainly will not be supporting Bill 106. No great surprise, the government says, but I think you're not surprised because you realize this is a draconian piece of legislation. We already have across most of Ontario a system of taxation that's based on MVA and what you're doing is introducing to the city of Toronto by way of this act MVA, something you promised you would not do prior to the last election, something you promised you wouldn't do in the last election. You're breaking yet another promise. You're introducing AVA, which is MVA, to the citizens of the city of Toronto and other cities around Toronto, and I say to you, he who breaks the promises in the end pays the price.

**The Acting Speaker:** Questions or comments?

**Mr John O'Toole (Durham East):** It's a pleasure to respond today. I was listening intently to the member for Cochrane South. I want to make sure that the viewers today understand, and I'm here to tell you, that the members of the government are friends of the teachers. In fact, we're friends of students.

**Mr John R. Baird (Nepean):** Quality education.

**Mr O'Toole:** Quality education. There are those who don't want to make any changes, but this government is making changes and we are accountable to the people.

When it comes down to the fair tax bill, Bill 106, for many years I've heard and most of the people here in this room — I know Mr Bradley from St Catharines knows very well that they have been discussing the tax system in Ontario for at least the last decade. Both previous governments have backed away from it, and this government is doing something about it. In fact, I'm sure that it will be a fair tax system at the end of the day. Two people living in the same community with the same size and valued house should be paying the same tax. It just makes common sense.

Much of what we're doing in this bill is to bring fairness back to the residential property tax base and to resolve long-outstanding problems with the farm tax rebate system itself. So I'm satisfied to speak very much in support of this bill.

I think the member for Cochrane South made a couple of points. Some of them were not completely clarifying

the intents of the bill, very well thought through perhaps. But I think the people in Toronto — certainly the previous government knows full well that they backed away from the hard decision. When they were looking at MVA and the people of Toronto started to scream because they knew their taxes were going to go up if that was brought in, they backed away from it. I think what we are doing is what we promised to do: to bring back fairness to all of the systems in Ontario, whether it's education or the property tax system.

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**Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines):** I was particularly intrigued by the member's comment that this government has targeted members of the teaching profession and students in its policies and that this bill was all part of that mix, because we know that it's going to be a circumstance where only the very rich will be able to attend post-secondary education, for instance. We're going to see that people with money are going to be able to send their children to private schools the way they do in the United States. As the public school system is bled by this government, they appropriate funding, you will see more and more people going to Upper Canada College or one of those places where rich kids get to go or privileged kids get to go. So I was glad he mentioned that as well.

From speaking to individual teachers who work on the front line of education, who deliver those services on a daily basis, who work with the children, I agree with him that there is an attack on those individuals and the role they are playing in our society. They are easy targets because what they've done is motivated those who have had some resentment of members of the teaching profession over the years; they've whipped up that resentment when they go to certain of their meetings, and as a result, these people who are on the front line are feeling somewhat beleaguered today. I had a letter from a student teacher just the other day from the Barrie area, Simcoe county, saying how the morale was so very low among those who see this government besieging members of the teaching profession.

I'm sure that the member also related this whole scheme to the tax scheme, where this government is giving a tax cut to the richest people in our society while it's cutting without mercy health care services, closing hospitals in the Niagara area, privatizing and Americanizing the system of education and health in this province. I'm glad he raised those issues during his speech.

**Ms Shelley Martel (Sudbury East):** I was very happy to see the member for Cochrane South remind members in this House and remind the viewing public out there about what the position of the Conservative government was during the 1990-95 period when our government brought in the proposal to change assessment, particularly in this city. There was a hue and cry and all kinds of whining and bellyaching like you never heard from the members of the third party who are now in government. The agriculture minister, who is here today, would well remember those debates because he was a member of that caucus who spent their time very vociferously arguing against the introduction of MVA.



What the Minister of Municipal Affairs has introduced is MVA. Let's cut right down to it: AVA is MVA. What it's going to mean in the city of Toronto, what it's going to mean to numerous other communities across this province, is an increase in property taxes. So we now see that Mike the Taxfighter has become Mike the Taxhiker, and this bill and a number of other initiatives being taken by this government are proof of that.

My colleague from Cochrane South talked about the repeal of the business occupancy tax. At the end of the day, what repealing the business occupancy tax means is that any other number of small mom-and-pop operations are going to be hit over the head, whacked over the head by an increased tax because the municipality is going to have no choice but to look to them to make up for the loss in revenue. Add to that the same tax hike that those same mom-and-pop operations and any number of other property taxpayers are going to pay when this government downloads social services, child care, health care services, public health, libraries and transit services, and any number of people right across this province are going to suffer a huge tax increase. That's what this government is bringing us. What a difference from when they were sitting on this side of the House.

**Mr Jim Flaherty (Durham Centre):** I listened with interest to the opening remarks by the member for Cochrane South and it concerned me that he began his remarks by saying, "This bill introduces market value assessment to the city of Toronto," because if you start a 30-minute speech on the wrong basis, you're liable to waste the next 29 minutes, which is what happened here.

First of all, it's not market value assessment, it's current value assessment. If the member for Cochrane South would look at the act and look at the third section, he'd see that, "current value" means, in relation to land, the amount of money the fee simple, if unencumbered, would realize if sold at arm's length by a willing seller to a willing buyer," which means what you could sell your property for.

Finally people in Ontario will actually get an assessment notice that makes some sense. They won't see some mill rate on it, some incomprehensible series of numbers; they'll see a number that actually relates to the current value of their property and the value of their neighbours' land.

**Ms Martel:** They'll feel better about that. They are happy about that.

**The Acting Speaker:** Order, please, member for Sudbury East.

**Mr Flaherty:** The concern has always been, what about seniors with low incomes and what about persons with disabilities with low incomes if one moves to a current value assessment? Our government has addressed that concern in the act, providing that municipalities may pass bylaws deferring the taxes of seniors with low incomes and persons with disabilities with low incomes for up to eight years, which is the solution to the difficulty that some persons with low incomes would face otherwise.

The other misapprehension that my friend from Cochrane South labours under is that this is only a problem in the city of Toronto. It's also a problem in my riding, in

the town of Whitby and the city of Oshawa, which also have not been reassessed, where taxes are not fair and equitable as between different parts of the community.

**The Acting Speaker:** The member for Cochrane South.

**Mr Bisson:** To the member for Durham Centre, I can only say taxpayers in your community, as across Toronto, are going to be really happy when they read their tax bills and they're going to know in the end that they're able to understand why their taxes went up, because that's all you're doing with MVA. In the end it means a higher tax rate to the people within the municipalities who are going to be affected by the change in taxation. That's what it comes down to.

To the member for Durham East who says — it was an affirmation. The member for Durham East stood up and said: "We believe in teachers; we love teachers; we take care of teachers. We think teachers are great." I listened to that, and they all applauded. And once the applause was finished, what did I hear? More heckling against teachers, right after the point.

That's the point we're making. You guys are targeting a certain group in our society unfairly. What you're saying is that you don't like teachers; you don't like, for whatever reason, the work they do; you don't value what they do. Those are the heckles we hear coming across from the other side.

**Mr Bill Vankoughnet (Frontenac-Addington):** Then why don't you want them to have the dividends?

**Mr Bisson:** Here we go again; more heckling. This time he wants —

*Interjection.*

**Mr Bisson:** I rest my case. It goes on as I speak. They're still heckling about teachers.

To the member for St Catharines, I want to thank him again for having responded to my comments, as he always does. When I get up and speak, he never forgets to mention my name in mentioning those comments, a personal thing between Jim and I.

To the member for Sudbury East, I want to say she's perfectly right. There's a new image in Ontario developing about Mike Harris. He ran in the last election and said, "I'm the Taxfighter." He ran around in his little bus with a whole bunch of other Tory minions saying, "I am the Taxfighter." Well, we're finding out through Bill 106 and we're finding out through municipal downloading, we're finding out through user fees implemented in health care and other services that Mike's new name is Mike the Taxhiker.

The member for Sudbury East is totally right. Yes, municipal taxes and other taxes will go up as a result of this government. There goes the name: Mike the Taxhiker.

**The Acting Speaker:** Further debate?

**Mr Ted Chudleigh (Halton North):** It's refreshing to hear the NDP concerned about taxes.

It gives me great pleasure to rise and speak to Bill 106, the Fair Municipal Finance Act, 1997, an act that among others before us today in this House removes the cost of education from the residential property tax.

This bill presents members with an opportunity that is unusual, indeed almost unique. There is no real doubt in



connection with property tax assessment in this province what the government of Ontario ought to do. There has been agreement among the three governments of the past, the three different parties, that it is unfair and wrong to maintain the existing patchwork of different assessment systems in Ontario. Not only that, there has even been agreement among those three parties about the kinds of systems we should move to. While taking account of the hardship that might result for some people and ensuring that any change we make is gradual, we should ensure that all property is assessed according to the price at which it could be sold. Such a standard is fair and consistent.

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As the Minister of Finance said in introducing this bill, "We are creating a municipal property tax system that is fair, clear, more consistent and more accountable." Instead of this fair system agreed to in principle by all parties, we have in effect many different systems in different parts of the province and often even in the same municipality.

In Toronto there is such a gap in property tax revenues from residential property that has not been assessed in decades, the city has been forced to raise taxes on business and commercial properties, so businesses pay more in Toronto than in neighbouring municipalities. This in turn has contributed to the flight of some businesses to the suburbs, which presents yet another threat to the city's revenues.

Because of the outdated assessments benefiting a few Ontarians, thousands of homeowners and businesses are paying more property tax than they should. Since the problem is so clear and it is of such long standing, one could well wonder why the other parties did not act on it when they were in government.

The member for Scarborough-Agincourt, when he was minister, said in a campaign brochure in 1990:

"Honouring Metro Toronto's request, the provincial government has taken the necessary steps to permit Metro-wide reassessment of property tax under the new system of market value assessment. This will ensure equity of tax burden between newer and older homes, bringing substantial savings to taxpayers of Scarborough-Agincourt."

Unfortunately the Liberal government was on its way out at that point, and the question remains: Why did they not act during their five years in government? The NDP similarly promised to act on a request from Metro Toronto and even went so far as to publish information on taxes that would be owing based on market value assessment. Again, however, they did not act.

Under the proposed new system under Bill 106, many homeowners could see very little change in their property taxes or even tax decreases. I wish to concentrate on some of the specific features of this bill which will improve on the status quo.

Many of the current problems revolve around assessment with the current use versus the highest and best use. One specific fear people have is that property will be taxed on a speculative value, such as in the highest and best use, rather than the current use. Under the changes made by this bill, the minister may make regulations

providing for current value to be based only on current use of land as opposed to the example of the highest and best use. A municipality may opt to have such regulations applied. Currently, in addition to the assessment of land, persons carrying on a business are assessed for business assessment. This bill eliminates business assessment, which now amounts to an archaic duplication of taxes.

Regarding farm lands and managed forests, effective for the 1998 tax year the tax ratio for farm lands and managed forest property class will be 25% for all municipalities. For the past 26 years the province has rebated 75% of the property tax on qualifying farm land after keeping that money for approximately six months interest-free. That program will now come to an end and the effect of the new lower tax rate on the property tax for farms will be the same. The managed forest tax rebate was first created in 1975 and then was terminated by the NDP in 1993, being reinstated by the Harris government in 1996. The rebate will now be replaced by a system that reduces the tax rate on eligible lands and provides a permanent incentive for Ontarians to maintain and conserve private woodlots.

Regarding the phase-in of tax changes related to the 1998 assessment, municipalities will have eight years to phase in tax increases or decreases arising from the 1998 assessment, provided bylaws to this effect are passed within those municipalities in 1998.

Regarding deferral of taxes for the low-income elderly and disabled, the changes made by the bill would allow municipalities to pass bylaws to defer assessment-related tax increases on property in the residential and farm property class, provided the owners are low-income seniors or low-income persons with disabilities.

Perhaps what is most impressive about this legislation is the flexibility it provides both in municipalities and for the Minister of Finance to ensure that Ontario keeps on moving towards a fairer and more effective tax system. The minister retains some powers to make relevant regulations to ensure fairness province-wide. The minister has powers to ensure that there can be timely passage of the legislation to provide the basic certainty that municipalities need to plan for 1998. The minister also needs ongoing powers to authorize local choices that the act contemplates, choices that give local governments the freedom to implement changes fairly and with sensitivity to local needs.

With this bill Ontario will move immediately towards a fairer system of property tax assessment that will lead to a lower tax bill for many Ontarians and stimulate economic growth and jobs. The bill also provides the flexibility to protect those who are most vulnerable in our society from property tax increases, the elderly and the disabled, while further steps towards fairness and accountability are taken in the future. This will create a stronger and more prosperous Ontario.

**The Acting Speaker:** Questions or comments?

**Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin):** I listened with interest to the member's well-written, ministry-written speech. Having been around this place for almost 10 years, one of the things I think, as a constituency politician, I would have a little difficulty explaining if I were a Conservative is how the replace-



ment of the farm tax rebate program with the present system will be of benefit to people who live in those rural townships.

I was speaking briefly yesterday about the township of Berry Island, for example, whose assessment is 46% agricultural. They will still have roads to maintain, they will still have to do all those things they've always had to do, but they are also having a huge number of provincial responsibilities downloaded, dumped to them; and even if we believe the government, which is a great stretch of the imagination, believe that's a wash — we know it isn't a wash but they say it is — it means that your neighbour is going to pay for your farm tax rebate. That's what it means. It means the municipality still has to raise the same number of dollars. It means you're going to pay that 30% more in the township of Berry Island just to be even.

I think I would have a hard time, if I were a Conservative member in a rural area, selling how that could possibly be of benefit to anybody in that township. It isn't. There's a huge amount of revenue being lost to these municipalities because formerly the provincial taxpayer paid that money.

**Ms Martel:** I am pleased to make a couple of comments based on the comments made by the member for Halton North. I remember during the election campaign and actually in the Common Sense Revolution, the then leader of the third party made it really clear that his party would do nothing that would increase property taxes at the local level, that they would not make any changes to municipalities without their consultation and without their input with respect to then having an increase in property taxes. As I look at this bill, I want to ask the member how much consultation might have occurred with the municipalities with respect to this particular change. It is certainly clear to most members in this House that Bill 106 is going to result in a property tax increase for many people living across this province.

Further, in the same bill you have the same government now repealing the business occupancy tax, and because of that repeal, municipalities will have no choice but to again look at the property tax base to make up the revenue they are losing through the business occupancy tax. I wonder how much consultation occurred with municipalities that now are going to have to increase property taxes, especially for small mom-and-pop retail stores, to try and make up the difference that they're going to lose. Maybe you can explain to me why the big banks, which have made so much profit in the last two years, should somehow get off the hook and the small mom-and-pop stores should have to pay more property tax at their expense.

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Finally, you really do have to explain to all of us, not only with this bill but with the downloading that is going to go on by your government to the municipal taxpayers, how it is that the commitment made in the Common Sense Revolution hasn't been broken. In the regional municipality of Sudbury, the net cost after your downloading is \$105 million. That will mean a huge property tax increase for people in my community.

**Hon Noble Villeneuve (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, minister responsible for**

**francophone affairs):** I want to congratulate my colleague from Halton North for his participation in the debate.

I was at ROMA last week and I had the opportunity and the privilege of addressing the good folks at ROMA. We have taken off the tax bill \$5.4 billion — gone, removed. The farm tax rebate: We will have a community reinvestment program — you'd rather not talk about that — \$1 billion annually to make sure there are no rural municipalities that suffer. We will also have a community reinvestment program for capital expenditures and for social service needs of \$1.6 billion. Figure that one out. We have removed \$5.4 billion in taxes. In many instances it is two thirds of the tax bill. That gives our municipalities a little room to manoeuvre.

We are transferring from 20% to 50% of the cost of social services. We're not downloading social services. It's a 30% difference, and it will be administered locally.

*Interjections.*

**The Acting Speaker:** Order, please.

**Hon Mr Villeneuve:** The opposition have a great deal of difficulty accepting that we are not throwing anyone to the wolves. We will be very much looking after our rural municipalities. Our farmers are very happy with the changes to the farm tax rebate, because the Federation of Agriculture and the Christian Farmers Federation have been asking for exactly what was delivered. I see the opposition wishing they would have had the intestinal fortitude to do what we have done in 18 months. I am proud of that record and I will stand with my rural municipal people and tell them, "We are there to support you."

*Applause.*

**Mr Bradley:** I was just reading the St Catharines Standard today, where St Catharines city council is fighting the province's move to stick municipalities with social service, housing and health care costs, so they're not going to greet much of your legislation with applause. They were very concerned about the impact, as has been the regional municipality of Niagara, because they know that while you may be taking education off the property tax — by the way, education is likely to even out in its costs because of declining enrolment — you are throwing back on the municipalities the costs of such things as welfare, which is unpredictable; mother's allowance, which is more long-term; social housing costs, which are bound to be rather significant for the municipalities; and ambulance service, where we now have an American company coming in called Metro/Rural. They are entering the Ontario, as they say, "marketplace," with the American attitude towards health care — not what we Canadians look at as the attitude. Americans are profit first and in the United States if you've got lots of money in your wallet, you get good health care. If you don't, it's just too bad. That's contrary to what we have in this province.

Also, there is public health, long-term care, seniors' care. The municipalities are beside themselves over the dumping of responsibilities on the municipal taxpayer. They will have no alternative but to slash even further the costs they've already slashed, or to put up municipal property taxes, which of course do not take into account



a person's ability to pay. So we have a progressive tax being cut — that's the income tax — a regressive tax being increased, and the people of this province are the losers.

**The Acting Speaker:** The member for Halton North.

**Mr Chudleigh:** I'd like to thank the member for Algoma-Manitoulin. Of course, Manitoulin has a fairly active farming community up there. I'm surprised the member doesn't realize that the farmers in that community pay their taxes in the spring, when cash is a little short on the farm, and they have to wait for six months while that money is tied up in the government until they get their tax rebate back under the current system. They get that money back; it's used by the government on an interest-free basis.

The agricultural community will be very pleased to not pay that money out in the first place and simply use that money to increase their productivity and reduce their bank loan in order to continue in the farming community in Ontario and to strengthen their position within that community.

The member for Sudbury East, I appreciate your comments very much. The consultation process with AMO and ROMA has been ongoing for years. I understand that long before I ever considered a career in these hallowed halls of the Legislative Building, those two organizations asked the governments of the day, going back many, many years, to remove the cost of education from the residential tax rolls in Ontario.

We are doing that. We are taking \$5.4 billion off that rate, as the member for Stormont, Dundas, Glengarry and East Grenville has so aptly pointed out, the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. He's a man who certainly has long titles after his name. That \$5.4 billion is also predicted to rise to \$6.2 billion in the very near future.

As the member for St Catharines pointed out, there is certainly some unpredictability in the process, which is why we have three different funds to level out that unpredictability.

**The Acting Speaker:** Further debate?

*Interjections.*

**The Acting Speaker:** Order, please. The member for Prescott and Russell.

**Mr Jean-Marc Lalonde (Prescott and Russell):** I am pleased to rise today and speak on Bill 106, An Act respecting the financing of local government; in French, *Projet de loi 106, Loi concernant le financement des administrations locales*. It is my duty as an elected official to come and tell the viewers of the province, to tell the people what the impact of this bill is going to be on the communities, on farmers, on businesses, on seniors, on young couples and on the poor.

I just heard the honourable Minister of Agriculture saying a little while ago that he spoke to the ROMA people last week, to the farmers. But it's funny; I've got a journal here that is the Ontario commercial farmers' trade journal. It's very clear in my view about who will pay the taxes.

It's true, according to the government there will be a reduction of \$5.4 billion in school or education taxes, but there will be a shortfall of anywhere between \$3 billion

and \$4 billion. You might ask, "Where are we getting those figures?" I just wonder if the people of this government have sat down and done the proper analyses on all the costs to the municipalities.

I have with me here a list of all the figures from 18 municipalities of my riding. Let me tell you, there are 19 municipalities in my riding but we have done a complete study of what the impact is going to be on the local community. I said many times that this government always concentrates on the urban community and they forget about the rural community.

Let me tell you that it's the municipality that is going to have a shortfall of \$2.9 million. This will mean an increase in taxes of 91%. I'm sure a lot of you members on the government side haven't sat down and looked at all the figures of what the impact is going to be on your communities.

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When I look at social housing, we have in my own communities 950 units. It's costing the government at the present time \$4.464 million. It's averaging \$4,700 per unit. Who will be paying that \$4,700 per unit as of January 1, 1998? This government is dumping everything on to our local municipality. The municipalities will have no choice but to increase the rent to those poor people who are living in those units.

We're looking at long-term care. Long-term care is going to cost, in my own counties, my own riding, over \$13 million. We haven't figured that out yet. Ambulances are going to cost anywhere between \$3 million and \$4 million extra to the local communities.

Right here in front of me I have the town of Vankleek Hill. It's a small community of 1,941 people. It's going to cost them, in social housing, \$474,911. For ambulance services, the calculation was done at the lowest level we could get. If we take this province, it's costing the Ontario government \$300 million for ambulance services, not counting the air services. If we add in the \$35 million already being paid by the city of Toronto, it comes to \$335 million. You divide that by the population in this province and it comes to approximately \$30.45 per person. So the town of Vankleek Hill of 1,941 population would be paying \$59,100 for ambulance services.

But there's one point we should remember: Will the municipalities be able to afford to keep the ambulance service going? What is going to happen if the municipality decides to cut the amount of money needed by the ambulance operators? There's only one solution. What this province wants is to have the ambulance services — I think that's what it is — have a meter like taxicabs here in Toronto or any other municipality in Ontario. When you order an ambulance to be transported to the hospital, you'll see the meter going and it's going to add up. This is the only way we'd be able to keep that service.

Police service: It's true that it probably wasn't fair that some of the municipalities were paying for police services and others were not, but for the town of Vankleek Hill it's going to cost \$330,000. How did I arrive at this figure? I contacted a lot of municipalities and the cost varies from \$172 per head to \$222 per person. I have based my calculation on the lowest possible, at \$172 per head.



Then there is one point the people on the other side, of this government, have never said yet: Who will pay for the assessment? We have to keep up the assessment of all the properties within our own community every year. We have costs. The average cost in Ontario is going to be \$31 per unit, per household. You multiply that by the population. This is the cost I got from the regional office, \$31 per household. Vankleek Hill is going to be stuck with a bill of just about \$30,000.

The library: There's no more grant. School tax, I agree, so I have to deduct the \$615,364 from the school. Anyway, the town of Vankleek Hill will have a shortfall of \$664,000.

But then I have to add up the additional costs of the county. The county's additional cost or shortfall will be anywhere between \$22 million and \$23 million, so this share has to be transferred to each of the 18 municipalities. If I'm looking at the amalgamation of the town of Vankleek Hill, West Hawkesbury, L'Orignal and Longueuil there will be a shortfall of \$1.5 million. This is the shortfall.

I haven't worked out about the drug services we are talking about, of having the municipalities pay 50% of the drug fee to the seniors or the long-term-care patient.

If I'm looking at the town of Rockland, the 1994 population — because that was the only figure I could get — was 7,547. They will have a shortfall of \$2.927 million. That is going to be the shortfall. If I'm looking at this with the actual mill rate they have, they will be looking at a possibility of a 91% increase in municipal taxes.

It's very important for all of us to tell the government to look it over again because it won't be affordable to live in Ontario. I'm sure you members on the other side haven't looked at every single item that has been transferred to the municipalities. Let's hope that having the Liberals and the NDP pressing the government to look it over again, you will come back and do some major adjustments, because it is impossible.

I'm looking at the town of Hawkesbury. Hawkesbury will be stuck with a shortfall of approximately \$4 million. I have the exact figures here for the small village of Plantagenet. When you people came out with Bill 26 the people of the government, not of the opposition, said: "What a beauty. The ministers will have full control." But I'm talking about a small village of 964 population. They will have a shortfall of \$1.5 million. To be exact, it's \$1,449,264, and I haven't added the share of the county fee or the portion the county will be charging the municipality of the village of Plantagenet.

Do you think those people will be able to afford that in Plantagenet? At the present time just the water bill in the village of Plantagenet is over \$800 a year. The people will be asking to move out of Plantagenet, let me tell you. But you do have friends in those areas. Just contact those people. Probably they won't give you the figures, but it is up to you, members of the government, to analyse every situation of every municipality.

It's true that I have some municipalities that would have a surplus. The municipality of Casselman would show — they decided not to amalgamate with any other municipality; they're most favoured at the present

time — not counting the transfer of the municipality, a surplus of \$29,000 because they did not amalgamate with the others. I always said, "Before you amalgamate make sure you do a complete study, a financial study."

I have all the figures here and let me tell you that in 1914 I believe when the First World War was declared we started up a tax called the First World War tax.

**Mr Douglas B. Ford (Etobicoke-Humber):** Temporary.

**Mr Lalonde:** Temporary.

In 1940 or 1942 we decided to have it on a permanent basis, but today we will call it Mr Harris's war of taxes. This is the way it should be called because it won't be possible to live. It's true that the people are saying it's about fairness. When we came down to a Confederation meeting in Charlottetown, we decided that we will help every province in Canada. We did it. We know that the province of Quebec is getting a lot more than we get from the federal government. The federal government, in this brown envelope, as I call it, of all the financial operations of the federal government, 43% of that envelope comes from the Ontario resident. Quebec is getting a real surplus of what they're paying. But we became a country because we wanted to help each other. If we look at Newfoundland, unemployment is very hard, so the province of Ontario is helping the province of Newfoundland. But does this government ever look at the possibility of helping the poor? I don't think so, not the way we have introduced this bill today.

1620

Mr Speaker, I have here an article also from the Globe and Mail this morning that is saying it isn't fair the way this government is going ahead with this tax. They haven't done their homework. They think they have, but I really feel at this point that we shouldn't even be discussing this bill, because even the government cannot come down with the proper figure of how much it is going to cost each municipality. We haven't got those figures. We've been asking for them and the Minister of Finance has been saying all along, "Yes, we do have the figures." I always said when I was the mayor of the town of Rockland, never vote on something that you haven't received. But I think you people on the other side shouldn't be even voting on it, you shouldn't be even debating this bill, because you haven't seen the results. You haven't seen the bottom line.

I'm going to go to the town of Hawkesbury with some figures, Mr Speaker, just to show you how much Hawkesbury is going to be badly hit with this transfer. Social housing in Hawkesbury is going to cost the town of Hawkesbury \$2.753 million. The ambulance services — and I got it down very low — \$283,000. They've already got in place their police.

But another thing that I just remembered now: The Ministry of Health used to do the inspection for the septic tank. You do not have septic tank services here in Toronto, you don't have septic tank inspection in the urban areas, but in the rural areas we have it. The Ministry of Health told me that it's going to cost anywhere between \$400 and \$500 per house that will be building a new septic tank system. Who is going to pay for that? If it is not the municipality, definitely it would



boost up the price of a house by a minimum of \$500, because any inspection or any permit to build a septic tank requires a minimum of three visits. So I'm using the figure of \$450 per household that requires a septic tank.

I spoke about the assessment, but the loss of the business tax in my riding alone, excluding the town of Cumberland, because I haven't got the figures yet, is \$3.8 million lost in our community, in the 18 communities. When I say that you're transferring, you're relieving all the municipalities by \$5.4 billion, you people on the other side haven't done your homework. You haven't looked at what the impact is going to be on every community of this province.

We talk about user fees all the time. It is true. User fees, it's a good word to use. In smaller communities, I think we'll have to look at the possibility of closing arenas. At the present time very often this is the only thing we have for recreation in small communities. We don't have public transit. It doesn't exist in our community. Public transit, for you people, if you decide to go to one of the ministries' offices, you just jump on the OTC in Ottawa or you just jump on the TTC here in Toronto. You get down there in 10 minutes. But again, in the rural area we don't have public transit. So when you talk about user fees, you should analyse, you should look at what impact it is going to have on all the rural communities.

I'm looking at the township of Russell, a population of 11,417. The cost for the police service is going to be close to \$2 million. The cost for ambulance service, at the rate of \$30.45 per head, is going to be \$350,000. The long-term-care costs are going to be \$557,000. The social housing in Embrun and Russell and Marionville will be \$413,000.

I'm looking at the assessments. It's an additional cost of \$115,000. The library grants will be taken off completely. Are we going to be able to afford to keep our library open? We say in French, "Une ville sans bibliothèque c'est une ville morte." A town without a library is a dead town. Will the municipality be able to afford to keep their library open? We always said the more we could use the library, the better it is for our youngsters in our community, and also our senior people. Very often we get a chance to go there and do some research. Are we going to be able to afford that? Probably with a fee. We don't get anything at no cost any more.

I'm looking at the small town of East Hawkesbury, which has decided not to amalgamate. They have a population of 3,153. It's going to cost them an additional \$155,000, and this is a town that has decided not to amalgamate.

When I look at all the others that have decided to amalgamate, we end up with a big cost. Like I said a little while ago, Vankleek Hill is going to be amalgamated with L'Orignal, Longueuil and West Hawkesbury. There's going to be a shortfall of \$1.5 million.

Casselman has decided to stay alone. There's a saving of \$29,000, \$30,000. Rockland and Clarence have decided to join, to amalgamate. There will be a shortfall of \$2.3 million. I'm looking at Cambridge. A lot of people don't know about Prescott and Russell. I hope by the time I'm finished today that you'll know about Prescott and Russell. We have 18 municipalities and 45 hamlets within our riding —

### *Interjection.*

**Mr Lalonde:** I'm sure my friend Mr Laughren here knows about the Perley bridge now since we had a long discussion at Quebec City last week. It's very important for our community to have a Perley bridge to cross the river and go to Quebec, because very often now we go and get our services in Quebec. If we want health services at the present time, we get better service when we go to Quebec than we get in Ottawa, because in Ottawa, we're on the waiting list. This is true. We could give you all the information.

**Hon Robert W. Runciman (Solicitor General and Minister of Correctional Services):** Go to Ottawa.

**Mr Lalonde:** We would like to go to Ottawa, but it's impossible. There's a waiting list. Mrs Deforges had to get a heart operation and she had to go to Quebec. She couldn't get on the list now. She would have had to wait probably six or eight months. By the time her time comes up, she might not be in this world.

I'm looking at Cambridge. Cambridge will have a shortfall of \$1.9 million — not Cambridge, Ontario; Cambridge in eastern Ontario. I have Caledonia in there and I also have Plantagenet south and the village of St Isidore, a small village of 740 people. They too will have a shortfall.

Every one of us in our riding will have a shortfall except Casselman, which has not decided to amalgamate, and also another town that will have a surplus of \$102,000. But mind you, I have to take that additional cost that the county of Prescott and Russell will have, which will be around \$23 million. This amount of money will be dumped like the government is doing to our municipalities, will be transferred to the local municipality and then it will add up. There will not be a surplus. There could probably be a shortfall of anywhere between \$300,000 and \$400,000.

1630

I think this government, before it goes ahead with second reading, should realize and should sit down with every member — there are 82 members on that side — and look over again what effect it will have on every small community. I'm sure, my friend from the Sarnia area, there will be a great impact in that area. My friend from Oshawa, my friend from — near Kingston anyway; I just forget his name. But anyway, every one of us will have a shortfall. I'd like to sit down and figure out what the impact is going to be on the town of Brockville alone, a town of a little over 20,000 people. Mind you, you have a lot of business tax coming from Brockville, but now you have eliminated all that.

But one of the points we should remember, and I wonder if the members of the government have realized this —

**Mr Marcel Beaubien (Lambton):** How's the hockey team doing, Jean-Marc?

**Mr Lalonde:** Pretty good, pretty good.

One thing that we haven't spoken about is, what will the municipalities do when they collect school taxes or the education taxes on business and industrial? I wouldn't be surprised if this government is looking at the possibility of transferring school bus services to the municipalities. There is definitely a reason why municipalities will



continue collecting education taxes. There's a reason for that for sure.

The government has decided to take all the residential, also the agriculture — they never spoke about the agriculture school taxes, but I'm pretty sure they're taking that away too. They abolished the whole business tax and now what's going to happen with the commercial and industrial school taxes? I'm afraid if they decide to dump this part on the municipalities, we in the county of Prescott and Russell will have an additional bill of over \$11 million. This is the cost of our school buses in our riding, \$11 million.

Everyone is really scared at the present time. I've been asking the Minister of Transportation what we are going to do with the school buses. If you look at the backgrounder when the minister made an announcement, when he presented a statement one day, the first paragraph of the backgrounder, "Community buses include school buses." The Ministry of Transportation or this government has decided to abolish all the transportation grants, all the grants for transit services, the bus services, community bus services, but what is going to happen with the school taxes on commercial and industrial?

This is the part I'm most worried about at the present time. Will this government say, "Now, you people at the local level, you've always said that you want to take control of your municipality"? True, they always said that, but not having a knife in our back. At the present time, all the standards will be established by the province and then they'll tell the community or the municipality: "Now you operate with your own money. We have decided to cut all the transfers."

One of the reeves, the reeve from Russell, Roger Pharand, told me one day: "Do we still need the provincial government? Now that we are going to take most of the responsibilities over, do we still need a provincial government?" Probably we only need the board to establish the criteria or the objective of this government. Probably that's all we need. I don't mind going back to my community and fighting for them again. If you transfer everything to the communities, there won't be much left. When you transfer the police services to the small communities, they will be responsible for five areas within the police services. Then one area will be handled by the province.

You've decided to transfer all the social housing. We could operate that, but let me tell you, the municipalities won't be able to afford renting the units the way they are renting them. Where will the people live? Probably it's going to be like in Jamaica, living in the mountain, having just a cardboard cover over them. They won't have any shoes. We live in a country where we have a winter. You people in Toronto here have realized finally what a snowstorm is. We get that experience every week down east. I would like to see you people driving down east once in a while. Just come down to Ottawa, come down to Prescott and Russell: You'll see we have a lot of snow and we enjoy our snow.

Once again, when you work towards the grand transfer or the subsidies to the municipality, have you realized that it is costing more for the people up north and down east than it is costing you people here in Toronto? We

have the snow removal that we have to look at. You have very little. We get a snowstorm down here and the whole traffic is jammed; everybody goes home at 2 o'clock. We've got so used to that down our way, instead of at 4, sometimes we decide to quit at 5 because we know it's going to take a little longer to get home but we like our job so we stay at the office. That's the way it is down east but probably not down here. We leave early down here.

I've mentioned a lot. I think we'll have to go over this very closely. My friend from Kitchener, I don't know what the weather is down there, but I know you have a good hockey team. But anyway, you have artificial ice for that hockey team.

To come back to Bill 106, once again, members of this government, sit down with the whole caucus and realize what the impact is going to be on small communities. I will have all the figures by the end of the week, but let me tell you, the county of Prescott and Russell is going to be shortfalled by over \$50 million. How do you think we are going to be able to afford this?

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin):** Thank you. The time has expired. Questions and comments?

**Mr Floyd Laughren (Nickel Belt):** I must say that I enjoyed very much that very thoughtful and well-researched presentation by M. Lalonde, the member for Prescott-Russell, and it's obvious that he has done his homework on this matter.

The member for Sudbury East and I attempted to do a little bit of homework in our community. We met with officials from the regional municipality of Sudbury to go over some of the numbers as to what is happening there, and that's one reason I appreciated the work that the member for Prescott-Russell had done. There, when you added up everything that's being added on to the responsibilities of the municipality, the regional municipality of Sudbury in this case, and subtracted from it the educational levy that's being removed from the local property taxes, the difference for our community — the regional municipality of Sudbury is about 160,000 people — comes to \$105.4 million more that will be absorbed by the local property taxpayers.

That does not take into consideration any of the relief fund that the minister has talked about to help municipalities cope. But I can see how long that lineup is going to be and how much money people are going to be demanding from that fund, and there's no way that this government is going to be prepared to make up the entire difference, not at the same time they provide the tax cut for some of our better-off citizens in this province.

The impact on the local property taxpayer in the regional municipality of Sudbury would be to almost exactly double their property tax bill, almost double it to about an extra, I think it was, around \$1,600 for every property taxpayer.

In closing, I wanted to once again congratulate the member for Prescott-Russell. I believe he was quoting the reeve of Russell when the reeve said, "Do we need a provincial government?" The answer is yes, but not this one.

**Mr O'Toole:** It's a pleasure to get up and respond to the member for Prescott-Russell. I did listen with some



enthusiasm mainly to his reporting of the hockey scores. However, he does make some point that some of the municipalities are scrambling trying to come up with some numbers to sort of justify that really there is some information that's needed before they can flesh out the full cost of this transfer.

I want to assure the people that I have been a local councillor. I'm sure M. Lalonde has been involved for many years in local government, and I respect him. He's a great person. I've travelled with him, and I know he has at heart the best interests of Prescott and Russell, his riding. But I can tell you, I don't think the numbers are all completely resolved in the municipalities; you don't have all the information.

1640

If you look back to the history of this debate, of straightening out not only the assessment system but who does what, this goes back to the Liberal government. I can report a few just off the top of my head. There was the Fair Tax Commission, which the previous government is very familiar with, and there's the disentanglement report. There was the whole exercise of the Golden report, which was our first attempt to look at it, and then we finally resolved it by asking David Crombie and the Who Does What commission to look at all the reports for the last number of years.

At the end of the day, they recommended that we take some things off the local property tax and disentangle who pays for what. Really, we're going to end up with a fairer, more understandable system. I really do believe that. We're removing from the property tax base the funding of education — long overdue, \$5.4 billion — and we're putting back down on that tax base a whole range of services that some municipalities will have to find partnerships in delivering, and I think at the end of the day we'll do more for less. That's what the people want us to do, each elected person, to reconsider how we do business.

**Mr Michael Brown:** I too would like to join in congratulating my colleague the member for Prescott and Russell. I think what he had to say was something we all should consider very closely. One of the things we've been asking for in opposition was impact studies across the province: What does this mean? We've asked for them repeatedly, but good members like the member for Prescott and Russell have been able to come up with those numbers.

In my constituency, I know that in the city of Elliot Lake they estimate their shortfall to be \$4 million. This is a retirement community. This will be an expensive burden on the property taxpayer in Elliot Lake if this cockamammy scheme is allowed to go forward.

I called the good clerk of Espanola, Merwyn Sheppard, shortly after this was all announced and asked him, "Merwyn, what do you think this is going to cost?" He said, "It's very difficult to figure out because we share so many services with other municipalities and it's going to be hard to come up with the bottom line." But he did say, "We're going to save ourselves \$1.4 million in property tax for education, but we're going to spend at least \$1 million just for the increase in general welfare and we'll have to spend at least \$1.2 million more for family

benefits payments," so if they just cover the social services aspect of this dumping, they're in huge trouble. That's what he told me.

I went over to Manitoulin. We're still having numbers come in because there are quite a few municipalities there, so we haven't been able to get precise numbers yet. But we do know, for example, that the cost of the ambulance transfer alone will cost them \$1.5 million. They can't afford it.

**Ms Martel:** I want to commend the member for Prescott and Russell for his comments this afternoon and follow up on some of the points he made. First of all, he was very clear that this bill and a number of other initiatives this government is undertaking will have a very direct and very negative impact on any number of property owners right across the province. The fact of the matter is that this government's position, from when it was over here in the third party, has changed 180 degrees. When our government looked at introducing MVA, the members of the Conservative Party who sat on this side went bananas. They were totally opposed to it. They were vociferously opposed to it.

**Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre):** Apoplectic.

**Ms Martel:** "Apoplectic" is another term we should use. They were completely against a property tax increase which was envisioned in that scheme. It is the same scheme that we are seeing introduced here. It will have the same negative effect on any number of property taxpayers right across the province. It is remarkable to see how the tune of this current government has changed, from when they were over here, on this very important issue.

Also, I think it was very good that the member for Prescott and Russell told members what the impact in his community is going to be of another initiative of this government and how local property taxpayers are going to get whacked again by this government.

My colleague from Nickel Belt made it clear that in the regional municipality of Sudbury the net cost to our community as a consequence of this Conservative government's dumping of services is \$105 million. It will work out to be about a \$1,600 increase per household across our region.

The Minister of Municipal Affairs and the Minister of Agriculture, who is here, can talk all they want about all the funding that's going to be in place to help municipalities like mine. Let me say that the lineup for those funds is going to be so long that the region of Sudbury will not see this government pick up that \$105-million difference, and many other communities will be in the same boat as ours.

**Le Vice-Président :** Monsieur le député de Prescott-Russell, vous avez deux minutes.

**Mr Lalonde:** My friend from Oshawa just mentioned a little while ago that the numbers have not been resolved. But let me tell you, if any one of you people here in this room have tried to get some figures from some of the ministries, the minister has advised them not to give figures. We're calling the regional office. The regional office director is saying: "Call the minister's office. There's a person in there who will answer to the



MPPs." We just can't get those figures. This is why even the members on the government side were not able to get the numbers.

Let me tell you, the impact is going to be really bad for the young couples, because the bottom line of the municipality has to be the same: If you have a \$5-million budget, you have to get that \$5 million. Today we just cannot depend on the government block transfer or the government municipal support grant.

I'm sure you people are all intelligent people. Just ask your Minister of Finance. Ask him to give you the figures. He hasn't come down with the figures to us. We would like to have them. We had to do our own homework, and I have every one from my 18 municipalities. If you people are getting the same thing, the same exercise that I do, you will see at the next caucus — you don't have to tell us. Just tell your Premier, your boss, that it's impossible to proceed the way this government is proceeding, by dumping everything down to the municipalities. It won't be affordable to live in this province. Your young couple will have to move. Make sure you give the message to the member.

The finance committee did receive some estimates, some figures from the regional office. They were supposed to be transferred to all the MPPs. We haven't received them.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Further debate?

**Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie):** It is indeed an honour and a privilege to rise today in this place and speak for a short time on this bill, in the context of so much else that's going on around us in the province under the aegis of governing and public policy and change.

I always find it an honour and a privilege to stand here on behalf of the people of Sault Ste Marie and, in my own humble way, to speak their voice, share with the members of this place the thoughts and ideas shared with me by the people with whom I come in contact when I go home to my riding on Friday and the weekend and rub shoulders with the ordinary citizen of this province. That's when I hear from them some of their concern, some of their excitement, the emotions, the sometimes very well-thought-out ideas they have about the things happening on their behalf in this place by way of legislation that is passed, by way of regulations that are passed and by way of new initiatives they see.

I have over the last number of months spent a fair amount of time back in my constituency, back in Sault Ste Marie knocking on doors. I probably knocked on about 350 doors back in November 1995. I've spent a fair amount of time meeting with groups, listening to people in my constituency office. On the weekend as I go about my business, sometimes at meetings, sometimes shopping in the malls or in the stores, sometimes when I'm at church on Sunday morning with my family, people come up to me and speak to me about things they're concerned about or that they hear or want me to know about. I have to tell you, in the last three or four to six months, as people come to understand and realize and feel at first hand the impact of some of what's being done to them by this government, they have more and more to share with me. Their anxiety seems to be more and more of a negative nature and their concern grows

daily. They know or they're beginning to know, and will know I'm sure as time goes on, just what it is that this government is about.

1650

I've also spent, in the last number of weeks, some time on committee in this place. I happen to sit on the standing committee on finance and economic affairs. You all know that the Minister of Finance recently appeared before that committee to deliver to us a statement on the financial affairs of this province. Following that, we had a number of groups come in to talk to us about the impact of that on them.

It's in the context of all of that that I want to put just a few thoughts on the record today re the bill that's before us, which is Bill 106, the Fair Municipal Finance Act. It, like everything else, follows the pattern this government is continually chasing and imposing and taking in order to get its business done. It's a pattern that is, by any measure or any analysis, one that buys into a notion of the world as driven by financial interests and financial interests alone. Certainly this bill, in its attempt to simplify a system that is actually quite complex and sophisticated in a short period of time, fits into that whole scheme, that whole pattern.

I remember when, in my own community, back about 10 years ago, we introduced the concept of market value assessment, and the uproar that was caused by that initiative, the difficulty it imposed on a whole lot of the citizens of my community, and how some political careers, some actually promising political careers came to a crashing end when market value assessment became the reality in my community.

You've heard in this House as late as today some of the members on this side suggesting to you that what actually is happening here under the aegis of actual value assessment is in fact market value assessment.

In my community what happened was a divide-and-conquer strategy, as it's going to do in the Toronto and Metro area and in fact across this province. It's going to set one community of people against another.

Over the years a system of tax assessment has evolved that has taken into consideration all kinds of factors that are sometimes hard to point to or be clear about or that are tangible in any way. That has gotten us to where we are today, which is a property tax system which on one hand delivers a whole range of programs that all of us have come to appreciate and expect, particularly when we find ourselves in some difficulty in some instances, but also some services that contribute to that quality of life which makes Ontario the very wonderful place it is.

What this government is proposing to do will see a very clear divide-and-conquer tactic again play out and rear its head, and at the end of the day will have this government impose a new system on us that will cause such trauma, both initially and in the long term, that some of the benefits that might be gained by doing some of what's proposed in this bill will actually be lost.

In my own community, when we brought in market value assessment, a whole lot of people who had planned out their lives to the penny financially who had some long-term plans in place were hurt very seriously by the imposition of this new approach to collect.



I'm not saying it's not important from time to time to take a look at how we tax each other to pay for the services we collectively decide are in everybody's best interests to do as a community. We should do that, and I think it's important to make sure that everybody is paying a fair share. But you can't do it overnight, and that's the first thing I want to spend just a short time talking about today: the speed at which this is all happening and the context within which it is happening.

If we do things in this place particularly that have such a fundamental and all-encompassing impact on the lives of people out there, ordinary people who are simply working hard, raising a family, contributing to their community and trying to make ends meet, we may not feel that some of the things we do here are that important, or as they play out, have the kind of impact they actually have. It's important for us to know they do. As I speak to people in my community, as I listen to groups of people who come before us in this place at committee and in other forums, there is a high anxiety level out there about all of what's going on, and this particular piece of legislation fits into that in a very classic way.

Consider for a second what this government is about, which is minimizing, diminishing the role of government in the lives of people, taking away things that government has always done on our behalf so that everybody is served in a way that's timely and helpful, the cost-cutting that goes with that, and in turn the tax break being proposed that will take away from this place the ability to continue to do some of the good things we all know we need to continue to do that we've come to expect. When we hear the Minister of Finance and his officials and some economists who come before us, and we had two before us at the standing committee on finance and economic affairs the other day tell us that as they travel the world — I don't think it's a secret, but the ministers of this government, particularly the Premier, the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism and others travel widely outside of Ontario, travel widely around the world to various and sundry meetings with the makers and shakers on the international monetary scene.

Mr Harris and Mr Eves tell this government that what they're doing is just wonderful stuff, because it's playing into their hands. It plays into their hands because what we're doing in Ontario is simplifying their ability to come in here and invest and high-grade all that is good, all the resources that are valuable and then leave us at the end of the day with what's left.

When you hear the international monetary community, when you hear the makers and shakers out there in the global economy and the economists who plug into that, who also travel in those circles, say these kinds of things and no voice, no reference whatsoever to how this is going to play out in the communities we all come from, how this is going to affect the lives of people who live on our streets, whose children play with our children, who attend the schools our kids attend, who shop in the stores we shop in, how this is going to impact the small business community in places like Hamilton, Sudbury, Sault Ste Marie and Windsor, when there's no reference to any of that, no impact statements whatsoever, no

business plan to speak to us about how all that is going to impact, you then cast a jaundiced eye at anything they bring forward, including this Bill 106, the Fair Municipal Finance Act, which is an attempt to change the way we collect property taxes in this province and the impact it will have on communities.

1700

We know from some of the statements that are made in this House, from some of the questions that are asked of the ministers every day in this place, from some of the speeches that are made by people on behalf of their community, that this bill and the downloading that is going on, and Bill 104 and Bill 103 and all of the other very dramatic and huge pieces of legislation that are going through this place these days at such a breakneck speed, will indeed have some very difficult and negative impacts on all the communities we represent.

I would say to you and to the government and to the people out there that we should be at the very least, even if we agree with some of what's proposed re this bill here — and I have to say, being honest with you, that at first blush the idea of a tax assessment system for the whole province that speaks of equity and a similar way of valuing property and making a judgement as to how much tax they pay on that kind of base makes sense.

I don't think there's — well, I shouldn't say that, but I know that when we were in government and we were trying to find ways to make sense out of a very challenging financial situation, we also were looking at what we could do to do a number of things. At the end of the day, when we got all the information in — you'll remember that we undertook the Fair Tax Commission. I know as parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Education in those five exciting years that we looked as well at how we might change the financing of education in a way that would be more positive and constructive and helpful and, yes, equitable, to people across the province, both in the way we collect taxes to do that kind of thing and ultimately in the way we spend taxes to make sure we provide good services. But we found out at the end of the day that it wasn't as simple as any of us would like it to be.

Before you come to this place, particularly if you haven't been here before, you have this image of the way things work. You think you can come here with all kinds of neat and great ideas to change the world we live in. You find out very soon that it's a lot more complicated than that, that it's a lot more sophisticated than that and that we have in this place systems that have been built up over a number of years that are there for a specific purpose.

They're there to make sure that one government, no matter how huge the majority or how confident or how arrogant they are when they arrive here, or how convinced they are that what they're about to do is the right thing and in the best interests of the people of this province, runs into all kinds of checks and balances that cause them to step back, to take a deep breath sometimes, to reassess, to gather more information, to consult a little more before they make the kind of changes that we sometimes want to make in a hurry.

We all know in our heart of hearts that when we make decisions in too much of a hurry — and we've experi-



enced this, I'm sure. I know I have in my own personal life and in my family life, that when I jump too quickly, when I haven't taken into consideration all the information that's available to me, when I haven't listened to the people who are going to be affected most directly by the decisions I'm going to make, at the end of the day I don't always make the best decision.

Even though this bill may, at first blush, present as a valuable piece of work that needs to be done, that other governments have done some work on, when you look at it in its own right and you see the change it's going to make out there to all the municipalities, to anybody who owns property, and you put it into the context of everything else that's going on in this place, it is massive. There are days around here now when I often wonder where it is that I am. It feels sometimes like Vietnam: There's a bomb today and another one tomorrow and another one the next day.

**Mr Michael Brown:** It's a revolution.

**Mr Martin:** That's what they said. It's the Common Sense Revolution and it is indeed a revolution.

*Interjection.*

**Mr Martin:** Well, it may in fact be long overdue, but you've got to take your time with it. You've got to make sure that people are on board. You've got to make sure that you're hurting fewer than you're helping and you have all the information that you need.

With all the bills that you've presented — Bill 103, Bill 104, Bill 105, Bill 106 — and all the things you're proposing to do out there, you don't think even minimally it would make sense that you would present to us, who have to participate with you in this exercise, who are duly elected, as you are, to this place to speak on behalf of our constituents and to stand up and be heard when our constituents are impacted, particularly negatively, to share with us some impact study, some detailed plan that shows how all of this is going to shake out? At the end of the day, when you've changed the way we do municipal government, when you've changed the way we oversee and govern education in the province, when you've changed the way we pay for a whole myriad of services that have always been the responsibility of the province, when you've changed what it is that communities are going to be responsible for and add on the way that you have in the last month or two, and then bring in a bill like Bill 106 that's going to change radically the way we assess and collect taxes of a property nature, you wouldn't have in front of us, at least for each bill, an impact study that would speak about the cost, the cost to whom, and at the end of the day, what it is that we'll be able to afford to have, and if we're not able to afford to have something, the alternatives you would propose to be out there to deliver those programs, particularly if they're valuable?

I suggest that it would be helpful to all of us if at the end of the day, looking at the massive amount of change you're imposing and wanting to make happen, you would have some kind of an overall blueprint that would have it all fall into place. Sometimes in my more cynical moments, I think in some back room somewhere, perhaps behind the Premier's office or maybe locked off from the cabinet room —

**Mr Michael Brown:** In the war room.

**Mr Martin:** — in the war room perhaps — there is this blueprint; that you actually do know what you're doing and you're just not sharing it with us. The sense we have from watching what you're doing is that at the end of the day, as it plays out, it will not be in the best interests of those people who we feel most strongly about.

It's maybe trite or easy to say this, but I think it's important from time to time to say it, that a society is not judged by how much it gives to those around us, and in our community who already have lots, but by how it deals with and treats those who have less, those who are in need.

1710

**Mr Speaker,** I don't have to share with you, I'm sure, but from time to time I have to remind the folks across the way, and sometimes some of the folks out there, but I think less and less as time goes on, because I think more and more they are getting the message and coming on board and understanding the concerns we have here as we deal directly with this stuff on a day-to-day basis. When I woke up on that fateful day in July 1995 —

*Interjection.*

**Mr Martin:** No, it wasn't the election day, it wasn't the morning after the election. It was the day I woke up to find that you had taken 22% of the income away from the poorest in my community. I knew then what you were about. I knew what this regime was going to be about and I had a gut feeling — I was hoping it was wrong — about what you were going to do and who it was you had in the cross-hairs of that rifle that you point from time to time with these pieces of legislation and with some of the initiatives that you bring down. It certainly isn't your friends on Bay Street you're attacking. It certainly isn't those on Wall Street and outside of our jurisdiction who are looking at what you're doing and saying it's wonderful what you have in mind when you do the cutting and the slashing you do.

It's interesting. The other day at the standing committee on finance and economic affairs, one of the economists was talking about how outside of Ontario now Mike Harris is right up there with Ralph Klein. They're just about to make statues out of them because they're revered so highly in those circles that you know so well because you travel in them — we don't — the makers and the shakers on Wall Street and the makers and the shakers you meet when you go to those meetings in Japan and Germany. They think this is just wonderful.

As a matter of fact, one of the economists said at one of the meetings she was at people were talking about Mike Harris less as a Canadian but more as an American. They said he was more American than he was Canadian. I had to say on that particular day that was one thing I could agree with him on.

**Mr Michael Brown:** Governor Mike.

**Mr Martin:** Governor Mike, absolutely, because Mike Harris and Ralph Klein are more in keeping with the tradition of the Ronald Reagans and the Christine Todd Whitmans and the governors of places like Alabama than they are in keeping with the tradition of premiers, including some of the Progressive Conservative premiers



we've had in this province over the years. I highlight the word "Progressive" because there's absolutely nothing that this government has done so far to suggest to me that it understands, is in keeping with or appreciates the term "Progressive," as it applies to "Progressive" and "Conservative" in the tradition of this province and in the tradition of this country.

Speaking on behalf of my constituents, who have gone through the market value assessment process in Sault Ste Marie and seen how that played out for them and some of the impact, this bill is really not any different. This is market value assessment of a different nature and in some senses it may make some sense to be looking at and moving in a direction that is at the end of the day more equitable for everybody. But to be doing it in such a short time period, when it is so complicated and so sophisticated — and there have been members of my party who have spoken very eloquently in this place. Mr Marchese, the member for Fort York, spoke the other night about the impact this will have on the inner city of Toronto, on the very fragile community of people who have fought over the years so diligently and so successfully to protect what they have. When you compare it to other large cities anywhere in North America it is the envy of all of them.

For you to be coming before us and suggesting that we do this in such a short time period and without the impact statements that we need to assess correctly the different parts of this bill, to see if there isn't something that could be done differently that might ease the pain a bit, is showing your arrogance and also your desperate drive to get all of this done as soon as possible so that you can help and make happy your rich friends and benefactors on Bay Street and Wall Street.

The other things I want to touch on before I finish, because I don't have much time left, are a couple of elements in the bill itself. A couple of weeks ago you came out and told municipalities that you were going to lift the cost of education off the property tax and that you were going to free up that space for them to move in and get some money out of there to do some of the things they needed to do.

Then a few days later you dumped on them, by way of the downloading, just a whole whack of things that they were going to now be responsible for that they weren't responsible for before, that the province always delivered.

Then you came in with this bill which says to them that you're going to equalize the tax system across the province. Not only are you going to do that, but you're going to remove a couple of pieces from the tax regulation that's already in place that will mean municipalities will have less money to pay for those things they will now be expected to deliver.

The business occupancy tax is one that I speak of and the farm land taxes is another. Some may say they're really not that important or that significant. I have to tell you that if you do the mathematics and you talk to the folks who collect those taxes and factor them into their budgets each year, as they look at how they're going to deliver the services their constituents want, those two pieces are going to be, at the end of the day, very significant and they're going to be gone.

I end my few thoughts here today in the way I started, saying that it's really important that this government, no matter what bill it is it's dealing with and trying to drive through this place, take the time that's necessary to listen to the folks who are impacted most directly by what will be the fallout from all that.

I suggest that in this instance and in the instances of all the pieces of legislation before us these days in this place, during this extraordinary session that doesn't usually happen, they're not listening to the folks who will be most affected. Because we don't have the impact statements we need to participate in a more helpful and informed way, we won't be able to have the kind of impact we would like on these bills and actually be able to offer suggestions for change.

Even with this bill here, Bill 106, which as I said may have in it the guts of something that could be positive, at the end it will not be either. I look forward to further activity on this.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Questions or comments?

**Mr Chudleigh:** Bill 106 is about property tax, but it's really about the fairness and equitability of that property tax and how it's applied. If we look at the current assessment system in Ontario today, do we have fairness, do we have equitable treatment of people throughout Ontario? No, we do not. Do we have that under Bill 106? Yes, we do. It creates that equity and that fairness across this province that all three parties in this House have agreed to over their terms of government over the past 10 or 12 years.

There's a current system of farm tax rebate. Is that fair and equitable to the farmers of this province? No, it isn't. It was a piecemeal program that was put in in the mid-1970s and it has put hardships on farmers at particular times of the year when they don't have money to finance their tax bills and have to wait, interest-free, to get that money back. Is that fair and equitable? No, it isn't. But the system we're putting in is fair and equitable.

Is it fair and equitable to raise money for the educational process in Ontario off of residential property tax rolls? No, it isn't. That's been shown for years. AMO and ROMA have constantly asked for changes in that area and we are bringing that in. We're bringing that in in a fair and equitable manner which will put Ontario in the forefront of fairness of financing educational costs in the province of Ontario.

To further ensure that we have a fair and equitable system in Ontario, we're putting in a one-time adjustment fund of \$800 million to ensure that municipalities can adjust to the new realities in Ontario. We're going to put in a fund of \$700 million in cases where welfare becomes a burden to individual responsibilities through abnormal conditions. Further to that, we're putting in a \$1-billion municipal restructuring fund that will continue year after year in order to make those adjustments. This is a fair and equitable piece of legislation.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Thank you. Your time has expired. The member for Algoma-Manitoulin.

1720

**Mr Michael Brown:** I always appreciate the comments from the member for Sault Ste Marie. I think the member for Sault Ste Marie is one of the most sensitive and well



spoken members in the Legislature, and while I don't necessarily agree with all his policies, I think what he has brought to us here is a sense of what this bill's effect is.

When I was a young lad my mother used to talk about the golden rule: Do unto others as you would have them do unto you. I always thought that was a reasonable kind of golden rule. Then when I got a little bit older my father, who happened to be a little more cynical, talked about the golden rule and he said, "You know, son, it's really he who has the gold makes the rules."

I think we are seeing that today with this legislation. Who benefits? The people with the gold benefit from what's going on here. Who doesn't benefit? It will be the people without the gold. It will be the seniors, the people in rural areas, the people who are affected by having property taxes go through the ceiling.

The member talks about taking the education tax off the residential base. That's a good idea. I don't think anybody in this province wouldn't think that's a good idea. But people like David Crombie and anybody associated with this exercise — I think David Crombie said there's no one left standing who agrees with this — disagree with having welfare, social housing, long-term care, ambulances and a myriad of other services dumped on to the property taxpayer.

**Mr Christopherson:** I appreciate the opportunity to comment on the remarks of my colleague the member for Sault Ste Marie, and would start the same as my colleague from the Liberal Party who talked about the sensitivity and the caring Tony Martin brings to this place.

Tony mentioned in his opening remarks that he had an opportunity to bring his humble opinion and I want to say that he is certainly one of the most humble members here, although compared to many, he needn't be because, quite frankly, in his presentations he brings far more compassion, understanding and caring about community than anything this government has offered up by way of its agenda.

The fact of the matter is that it takes a great deal of hypocrisy, in my opinion, for a government member to respond to the honourable member for Sault Ste Marie and talk about fairness and equity when there's absolutely nothing fair or equitable about this government's agenda. This bill is no different than any other bill. They're ramming it through it at record speed. They're lumping it in with all kinds of other incredible changes, all of which, at the end, leave those that have the least with less and those that have the most with more. In this case any ability to have equity or fairness is lost when you add everything else that this government is doing.

In my community, your downloading of the majority of your responsibilities on to Hamilton-Wentworth is going to cost us \$121 million extra at the end of the day. You talk about your fund being there. You don't talk about the escalating costs over the years. You don't talk about how long that money is going to be in place. All you talk about is your narrow agenda, one that leaves people like those in Sault Ste Marie and Hamilton-Wentworth behind the eight ball, and the member for Sault Ste Marie has the guts to stand up and take you on.

**Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland):** I recognize the member for Sault Ste Marie and his presentation, a very

compassionate speech that he made. I would remind him there are probably two types of governments and both are very compassionate. There is the type to the left that he's referring to, instant compassion and looking after people with all kinds of money, with his style, but I'd remind him that the government of the day is an extremely compassionate government about our children and what they'll have to pay for our spending today. We're compassionate and concerned about their future and the kind of debt they are going to have.

He talks about fairness. I don't know how you could have anything more fair than actual value assessment, which is updated every year. What it's really all about is that similar properties that have similar values will pay a similar tax within that same municipality. It's all about coming up with a sound basis for that assessment.

I think you should look at the taxes. People are going to be mad because taxes go up. Unfortunately, they really should, when their taxes go up, be saying, "Thank you that in the past I had low taxes." Now they'll be paying their fair share, but looking back, they should be happy they had such low taxes in the past. Those whose taxes go down —

*Interjections.*

**Mr Galt:** Just listen to this. Those whose taxes go down are the people who should be angry, because they've been paying too much in the past. They're the ones who should be upset. Instead of the way that you're looking at it, use some common sense on how you go about looking at that particular item. What we've had is one of the most archaic systems of taxation going back to 1940-41, when many of the areas in Toronto were assessed, and that's the basis of today's taxes.

*Interjections.*

**The Deputy Speaker:** Further debate? I'm sorry: The member for Sault Ste Marie. The member for Sudbury East and the member for Hamilton Centre, you make so much noise that I even forget my own procedures. The member for Sault Ste Marie.

**Mr Martin:** It wasn't just the members for Sudbury East and Hamilton who were creating the noise in this House. It was coming from all sides because we're having a hard time believing some of what we were hearing.

I want to thank the member for Halton North and the members for Algoma-Manitoulin, Hamilton Centre and Northumberland for taking the time to get up and respond to some of what I had to say. I appreciate some of the kindness that was shared.

I wish, though, that I could believe some of what was presented by the government members, but as I look out there, I see the impact of what you've done on the people in my community that I feel most strongly about. Perhaps that's a shortcoming on my part, I'm not sure, but I just can't help but be cynical about anything you do, including this bill here which, as I said in my speech, is presented as somewhat innocuous, but when you get into it, as we did when we were government, and you look at the complication, the sophistication and the interconnectedness of things, you begin to realize that you can't do it in two weeks or three weeks, that it takes longer and that you have to hear from more people and



you have to have an impact statement that goes along with it.

I will be more apt to listen to, to accept and work with the government when they bring to us here for our perusal a budget that factors in the impact of what they are doing on communities, recognizes and puts numbers on some of the poverty that's being created and the tension and the stress that's being put on institutions like education, health care and social services. When they do that, I will be willing to sit down with them and to talk about what else we can do together.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The member for St Andrew-St Patrick.

**Ms Isabel Bassett (St Andrew-St Patrick):** I want to use the occasion today to summarize some of the misconceptions that I've heard over the course of the debate. I want as well to thank all the members of the House for their input into the bill. Some of them may not have agreed with everything that we have said or that we are putting forth, but at least they have raised some objections that I feel I want to clear up today.

First of all, I want to talk about the simplified appeals process. A lot of people are saying, "The appeals process: terrible thing, terrible thing." Actually what we are doing is fixing an outdated system that doesn't work. We are streamlining the appeals process. It's absolutely clear that the appeal will be heard by the Assessment Review Board, an independent tribunal whose decision will be binding, so there is final recourse for people who cannot work out their differences in a 90-day period. We're increasing the deadline for making appeals. We're extending it from 21 days to 90 days, which will permit more complaints to be resolved through a new informal discussion process rather than through formal hearings. We feel this is a move that is going to make the system much more clear and easy and fair for people.

1730

The second theme that I keep hearing in these discussions is the business occupancy tax. Although this tax was created and brought in in 1904 and is outdated, unfair, some people are saying, "You should not take it off." We are eliminating the business occupancy tax. This means the taxation levels will be able to be decided by municipalities, which is how it should be and which is what municipalities have been requesting. They will have the authority to decide how to raise their revenues by applying different tax rates to different property classes. The municipality can choose whether to reduce expenditures or whether and how to recover the BOT revenues. We feel and municipalities feel that this is a much fairer system and certainly it's fairer for tenants.

Lastly, I want to raise an issue. Members on the other side of the House keep saying, "Oh, well, this is the same as market value assessment." I want to say that our new tax system is not only going to be fairer and more equitable; it is very different from the market value that both the NDP and the Liberal governments tried to bring in in their last terms.

One, as my colleague the member for York Mills pointed out, the new assessment that we're bringing in will be based on 1996 assessments rather than 1988 assessments. If you know anything about real estate, 1988

was a very volatile year and people's homes were away up, so assessments therefore were away up; 1996 is a very level, fair year.

Two, in determining a value-based assessment, actual value or current value, not highest and best use, is the value assessment we are going to be using. That is a much fairer system. I have people in my riding, for example, whose places were being valued for a business development because they happened to be in a very strategic, expensive area, living in a very humble house. The current use is a much fairer way of looking at things.

Three, taxes will be based on a three-year average of values to increase stability and certainty. That again is another important point to remember. It allows you to average your assessments over three years, and that sort of evens off the peaks, and I suppose valleys as well.

Unlike many market value proposals that other governments have suggested, municipalities may protect their most vulnerable citizens, such as elderly people and the disabled, and people who are having a large tax rise because they've been paying unfair taxes for years will be able to have up to eight years to get used to the new tax level. We feel this is a fair system to bring in.

Bill 106 certainly makes important and long-overdue changes, as everybody who has spoken on the bill certainly on our side, the government side, has pointed out. It makes changes to how services are delivered to the people of this province, and these changes will ensure that Ontarians get the highest quality of services at the lowest possible cost. It will increase accountability of governments and improve fairness for taxpayers. It will also introduce the Ontario fair assessment system, which will bring fairness, as I said, to property assessment. Similar properties, as we have pointed out again and again, with a similar value within a municipality will pay similar taxes, which is the only fair way to go.

This government, as I've said before and other people have pointed out, is taking up the challenge of fixing the problem of out-of-date and confusing assessment values. Past governments have failed to take this important step. Bill 106 creates a framework for a municipal property tax system that is fair, clear, more consistent and certainly more accountable. People in businesses who have been paying more than their fair share will see their taxes reduced.

To reiterate, I would like to thank everybody in this House who has contributed and had input into this bill, and I'm sure we may be hearing more. Thank you very much.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Questions or comments?

**Mr Bradley:** Thank you, Mr Speaker, for the opportunity to comment on the government line which I've just heard, a line all the members are given to provide to people across Ontario. I'm really wondering how many of the Conservative members actually believe it any more. Initially they did, and the ones who want to get into the cabinet of course say most vociferously: "I do, I do. Me, me, me, Premier. Me, Premier. I believe it." That's what happens. But for the others, I'm beginning to wonder how many of the others really believe in this.

I listen to some of the members from the Hamilton area, Hamilton West and Wentworth North and so on,



and they're getting queasy about this. I can understand that. With this bill, on top of all the other downloading we're seeing, I think some of the Conservative members are beginning to hear, maybe quietly, even from some of their Conservative friends on municipal councils. There are some out there who, no matter what the Harris government does, they will defend you; they will be your official spokespersons. They're people who hope they're going to get an appointment or can go and play golf with Mike Harris. There's some favour they're going to get: They can go to a big gathering with him, some social occasion.

**Hon Al Leach (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing):** The Albany Club.

**Mr Bradley:** As my friend the Minister of Municipal Affairs says, they may get to go to the Albany Club and break bread and drink champagne with the Premier and other senior members of the cabinet.

**Mr Ford:** They're going to see Brian Mulroney.

**Mr Bradley:** They want me to mention Brian Mulroney. You know, there are people out there who still remember those years, the Mulroney years. I guess the ones on the government side remember it with fondness, but many of the people I know out there remember those as less than desirable days.

**Mr Christopherson:** In responding to the prepared, canned speech of the member for St Andrew-St Patrick and picking up where the member for St Catharines left off, the fact is that there's just one spin to this. I still have not yet seen any of the members truly stand up and reflect on what's going to happen in their own communities in their own words, in their own notes, and talk about all the other things the government is doing. From where we sit over here, it's truly not fair to try to look at this issue in isolation from everything else you're doing, given the fact that everyone is feeling so overwhelmed. I for one am one of those who believes that is by design. That's not coincidental.

You're very much hoping, and are unfortunately somewhat successful, that by having people so overwhelmed with everything you're doing, it's difficult to give fair analysis and criticism and attention and to counterlobby and use all the checks and balances in a parliamentary democracy to respond to the initiatives and push of a majority government.

The member talks about — I want to mention this just once and briefly, but certainly it was an inflection in the voice: "Those who know about real estate." I offer up that I and probably very few people in this place understand real estate the way the honourable member does. You win on that one hands down.

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Let me say also that when you say it's a good thing that the business tax is coming off — it's not necessarily a good thing when you take a look at the long-term implications of who has influence in the new restructured municipalities. It's going to be more difficult for the average person to become a school trustee or to become a councillor in their local area, and that will affect the kind of decisions that are made. Saying that eight years to have it factored in and phased in is going to somehow make it all right is not true when you look at what's happening to property tax —

**The Deputy Speaker:** Thank you. Your time has expired.

**Mr Baird:** I listened with great interest, particularly to the comments from the member for Hamilton Centre, who said that somehow there's a belief that this government is trying to overwhelm people. I took the opportunity to look up what his government did in the last year of its mandate when it was in government. It didn't do anything. The Legislature wasn't even sitting for the last year, which sort of underwhelmed the population of Ontario. No agenda for jobs, no agenda to get us out of our debt crisis, no agenda to deal with welfare reform, and that's something this government has followed.

In response to my colleague the member for St Andrew-St Patrick, she obviously got the facts on the bill, did some research, did her homework and came to this place to debate a specific initiative, a specific piece of legislation where she could contribute substantively, something she's noted for in this place.

She mentioned the 1988 values. I can tell you what happened in my constituency: 1988 was the first year the Liberals had a majority government in 50 years, and when they got their majority government, the spending machine cranked up, I'll tell you. Inflation went up, housing prices went up and then they went right down when they forced us into a recession. As the member for St Andrew-St Patrick mentioned, 1988 values were so inflated because of all the waste and wild spending of the members in the Liberal Party; 1988 was such an abnormality, and for people in my community to have to pay taxes on the 1988 value was crazy.

Who paid more taxes, who picked up the slack for the unfair assessment rates? It was the people in the starter homes, those young families starting out, the first-time home buyers. People were saying, "Don't change the system; we'll just get these young families to pay more," these young families who might dream of the day when they could get in the car and drive their kids to Disney World on the holidays, dream of the day of owning their own home, and then they get socked by an unfair tax system.

**Mr O'Toole:** Whacked.

**Mr Baird:** They got whacked, as the member for Durham East said. That's what the comments of the member for St Andrew-St Patrick were all about.

**Mr Michael Brown:** I was interested in 1988. That was a very remarkable year for real estate values. It was a year in Ontario where the deficit of the provincial government was in the neighbourhood of \$1 billion, about one seventh of the present government's deficit. It was a year when unemployment in Ontario was less than 6%. It was a year when people worked.

*Interjection.*

**The Deputy Speaker:** Member for Nepean, you had your chance.

**Mr Michael Brown:** It was a year that Ontario had the fastest-growing economy in the western world. It was a year that was creating jobs as never before. That was the year of 1988. Yes, property values and real estate values went up. Generally, that's what happens in an economy that is doing extraordinarily well.



It may be unfair that 1988 was used as the assessment year, but maybe 1997, if we're lucky, will be a year like 1988. If we're lucky, it would be just like that. Maybe it would be a year that people worked. Maybe it would be a year that we had prosperity. Maybe it would be a year where our children had hope, where the unemployment among our youth was at historically low levels. Maybe it would be a year we could go to school.

Maybe 1988 will happen again, but I don't see that under this present regime. This is a government that is practising New Jersey politics. This is about raising property taxes, because property taxes in your view are where the revenues for government should come from, and they have the added benefit of people being able to blame another level of government for those tax increases.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The member for St Andrew-St Patrick has two minutes.

**Ms Bassett:** The member for Hamilton Centre says I should speak from my heart. When I look at our tax system, which is unfair, not transparent, outdated, I think, "You people sitting there all these years, why haven't you done anything to change it?" In my riding of St Andrew-St Patrick —

*Interjection.*

**The Deputy Speaker:** Member for Hamilton Centre.

**Ms Bassett:** — people in the same block are paying enormous differences in their property taxes. People who have no money or very little money, as the member for Nepean pointed out, or very little money, are seeing people who can well afford to pay more paying nothing, practically, in relation to what they're putting aside, penny after penny, to save to be able to stay in the wonderful riding of St Andrew-St Patrick, which anybody in their right mind would save to stay in if they possibly could. That is why people don't move out. Other people are saying, "Oh, well, you could move out." They want to stay there.

What we are doing with this bill, at last — and our government, Mike Harris, has the courage to do something, not to put it off, although the Liberals I understand were going to do it and then the election came so they couldn't do it. Here we have a government that is going to act, and because we're going to act, people who know the argument so well because they wanted to do it themselves are fighting back at us. We are going to make it equitable. Some of the people who are going to be hurt or whose taxes will go up can well afford to pay it. The others are going to find that their taxes are going down, and I believe that is right and fair.

We are certainly trying to explain to people who are going to have a little bit of change that in the long run this is right.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Thank you. Your time has expired. The member for St Catharines.

*Applause.*

**Mr Bradley:** I want to thank the government benches for that warm round of applause as I rise to speak in the House today.

I'm often intrigued by the speeches that come from the government. I guess the general public doesn't use the word "spin" that much, but you know the message the

government has for you. The message is created in the Premier's office by those non-elected advisers who do the polling and listen to the Republican Party in the United States. They use words like, "If you disagree with us, you're for the status quo," that's what they like to say, or "change," because they know that's a word that resonates well. I find it intriguing to listen to that in the prepared government speeches and even in some of the interventions we hear of a more spontaneous nature.

People, I remind the government, won't be sending letters to thank you when their taxes go up because of this. The people who are adversely affected will, I assure you, be writing letters of disappointment and anger when their taxes go up in certain parts of Toronto and other areas. The others, you will find, whose are going down, will say, "Why didn't you do it 10 years ago or 20 years ago?" This is not an easy situation to deal with.

I put it in the context of the whole government program. I know what's coming next. I heard how this is supposed to help people in apartments, but a lot of people out there don't know that you people are going to get rid of rent control. So all those seniors and people with modest incomes who are relying upon rental accommodation are going to find huge jumps in rents over the next several years.

It won't all happen at once, I assure you, but when they change apartments, when they change rental accommodation we'll see the cost jumping. The theory out there is that somehow the marketplace will keep prices down.

Premier Davis understood in 1975 that it did not do so, that there was extensive gouging going on. So when I hear the government say that this particular bill is going to help them, I can assure you that people in rental accommodation who will see rent control disappear despite the fact that many of the members — I will get to VLTs later, I want to tell the member who held up the VLT sign.

Despite the fact that many government members ran on a platform of maintaining rent controls, they're going to disappear. I know that many senior citizens in my riding, some of whom may have been attracted to the let's-go-back-to-the-1950s message of the Premier, won't be very happy at going back to the rents of the mid-1970s, at least the increases that were taking place. That'll be another day and another battle but it has something to do with this bill.

There was a big announcement made one day —

*Interjections.*

**Mr Bradley:** I hear a reference being made to Susan Fish's fund-raiser over there and Roy McMurtry's fund-raiser, and who else was it, Dennis Timbrell's fund-raiser — don't interject with that name — and I look at the education and property taxes and say that one day they had a big announcement, "We're going to take education off the property taxes," and there was a big round of applause. But a couple of days later they found out that the other shoe dropped and a lot of those municipalities which were quick to applaud are today extremely critical. Even the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, not known as a militant organization by any means, particularly in recent years, has been very critical of this government for the package of legislation that it sees coming.



1750

Your government is dumping both the responsibility and the blame for cuts and increases in municipal property taxes on the municipalities. The smart guys in the Premier's office will smile, rub their hands and say, "Look, don't you worry." I don't know if they speak at your caucus, but if they don't, they have other people speak at your caucus on their behalf, ministers, and they'll say, "You know, we've put one over on them. You know what's going to happen? They're going to thank us for the income tax cut and they'll blame the municipalities," the people the Premier calls the whiners, "for the increase in taxes and for the cuts. We'll look good and the municipalities won't, and maybe we'll get re-elected again if we can fool enough of the people with that particular promotion."

I don't think that's the case. I think people at the municipal level are too wise to fall for that, and we're already seeing that they recognize that they're getting dumped upon them very onerous responsibilities and some additional costs into the billions of dollars.

You are cutting the most progressive tax, the income tax. The income tax takes into account a person's ability to pay because it's how much a person makes in income. If a person is at the lower end of the income scale, that person pays less tax than a person who is fortunate enough to be at the highest end of the income scale. I know the bank presidents and others are happy with this because they're going to get tens of thousands of dollars in returns in terms of their income tax cut. But the poor people out there who are going to have to pay the property tax increase, the most regressive tax there is, are not going to be very happy about it.

You see, the problem with the property tax is that it does not take into account a person's ability to pay. If a person happens to be unfortunate enough to be disabled — maybe not permanently, but for a period of time — or that person happens to be unemployed, or that person happens to be on social assistance of some kind even for a relatively short period of time, or that person happens to be ill and unable to earn the kind of income that would be very advantageous to the person, what happens then is that the person must still pay the property tax. Nobody from the city or the town or the township or the county or the region comes and says: "Don't you worry about your property taxes. You don't have to pay them."

That's what I mean when I say it's regressive, and that is wrong. But it fits in with what many people view as the philosophy of this government: Look after the richest and most powerful people and to heck with the rest of the people, because if the rich are doing well, somehow it'll trickle down to somebody else in our society.

You are increasing those property taxes. You have to know as well, and I heard the Premier — and I think the Minister of Municipal Affairs as well, but the Premier certainly — saying, "The municipalities will just have to cut the way we've cut in the provincial government." Let me tell you something: They've already cut. I avoid being critical of governments in the past, but in the economic circumstances facing the NDP in the midst of a very difficult recession, they were restricting the amount of money going to municipalities. They required

in those days that municipalities, as senior levels of government had to do, were going to trim. Many of them have now cut to the bone. They've cut a lot of services at the municipal level. What that has meant in many cases is again that the people with the most modest income are the worst off.

Let me give you a very tangible example, because we think a lot about hockey in this country: You think of little kids who play hockey. It's pretty expensive. Some municipalities have subsidized the costs of ice time for minor hockey. They've kept the price down so that kids who want to play hockey are able to do so because the costs aren't quite so great for signing up, for registration. But when municipalities have been faced with user fees, with the drastic cut in transfer payments — that is, the money that goes from the province to the local government — they have raised those fees and so fewer children — I say to the member for Etobicoke-Humber that what happens is those kids don't get to play hockey. They have to go and play in the mall or something, or play street hockey. They can't play hockey the way that the kids of people who are rich or who have money can play. That's unfair. That's treating children, who have no control over their own circumstances, unfairly.

But it fits with the philosophy. It fits with the Americanization of this province, because what's happening in the United States is that the gulf between the rich and the poor continues to grow wider. The poor get poorer; the rich get richer. That's what you people on the other side emulate. That's what you worship. You worship New Jersey. My friends on this side of the House will know this: Property taxes in New Jersey have increased remarkably. Why? Because Governor Whitman —

**Mr Christopherson:** And state taxes.

**Mr Bradley:** State tax as well. If they're income taxes, they've come down, but the property taxes have gone up, and the Republican governor is cheered by her particular group of people in this regard.

We now have dumped on the local municipalities long-term care — seniors' care, that is — and we're worried about privatization. Local municipalities that can't afford this will be looking to the private sector. We'll see the profit motive entering into seniors' care.

We have sewer and water being dumped in some local municipalities. We used to have a considerable number of grants going to help out those municipalities meet their environmental obligations. Today the environment is just pushed aside. The Premier admitted it today. There was an article in the *Globe and Mail*, you will recall, that said this government was abandoning the environment. They were just going to try to fight off people who were calling them to account.

What else is happening in the context of this bill? Roads are being downloaded. The responsibility for roads is now going to the local municipality.

Ambulance services: In our area and your area, Mr Speaker, outside of Ottawa, an American company, Metro/Rural Corp, is moving in. In New York state, if you want to get into the ambulance, you pay over \$200 to enter the door. If you want to get any service while you're in there, over \$300 and so on. So that downloading to the municipalities for ambulance service is of concern.



We have a fire services bill out there that's going to cause great problems for fire services in the province. We have more and more of the police services costs now going to the local municipality. Wait till some of these Tories head to their cottages and find out that the tax bill's going to be up on the cottages because of the police services.

**Mr Baird:** Two minutes to go and no Conrad Black.

**Mr Bradley:** I'll save that for the second half.

Seniors housing is another area where you have down-loaded, and these seniors are going to be very vulnerable because municipalities won't be able to handle this cost.

Development charges: You're going to fix your developer friends. You're saying: "Municipalities, we're going to put all this cost on you, but guess what? We're going to take away one of the sources of revenue you had, the money for development charges, because we want to make our developer friends happy, and that will ensure that we have a lot of people at our fund-raisers."

You're dumping public health on to the local municipalities. Even the assessment responsibility will now be a cost that will be entirely met at the local level. We see many areas.

Perhaps this is a suitable time to terminate this portion of my remarks. I have more. Members have been asking me for certain parts, certain components. I will be back tomorrow and I want to assure you that I will mention all of the factors that you have said. So I will adjourn the debate at this time, Mr Speaker.

## ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin):** Pursuant to standing order 34, the question that this House do now adjourn is deemed to have been made. The member for Downsview has given notice of her dissatisfaction with the answer to her question given by the Attorney General concerning plea bargaining. The member has up to five minutes to debate the matter, and the parliamentary assistant or the minister, who's coming now, may reply for up to five minutes.

1800

## VICTIMS OF CRIME

**Ms Annamarie Castrilli (Downsview):** I'm pleased to have the opportunity to raise this issue, which is an issue of some importance, with the Attorney General. I hope we can come to some sort of conclusion and have a clear answer from the minister in the public interest.

I know the minister and I share an interest in the transparency of the justice system and the importance of public confidence in that system. He has on many occasions indicated that this is of importance to him and I have no reason to doubt him. He has also indicated an interest in victims' rights, which as you know is also an area in which I have a long-standing interest. You may recall that my first act as a member of this Legislature was to introduce a private member's bill on victims' rights in October 1995.

The government subsequently brought in a bill. I must say, in introducing the government legislation the Attor-

ney General said, "This government will not accept a system that allows victims of crime to suffer twice: first at the hands of the criminal and second under a justice system that does not respond to and respect victims' needs." He reiterated that again on June 10. Again his quote in Hansard of that day is:

"This government will not accept a system that allows victims of crime to suffer twice: first at the hands of the criminal and second at the hands of a justice system that does not respond to and respect victims' needs. Victims have told us that they feel alienated by the justice system. They are intimidated by the system and made to feel that their needs are secondary to the rights of the accused."

Which brings me to the issue at hand, the whole issue of plea bargaining. You may recall that there was an outcry after the Homolka plea bargain. Some 300,000 people signed a petition decrying the lack of transparency in the process and indeed decrying the very bargain that was made. I'd like to point out that this was not an isolated incident. In fact CAVEAT, an association which has long been associated with victims' rights, has adopted a recommendation that asks for guidelines on the appropriate use of plea bargaining, including a mechanism for accountability, and training in the appropriate uses of plea bargaining from the victim's perspective and consultation with victims with respect to plea bargaining.

That brings me clearly to the question at hand. We've had a report by Mr Justice Galligan in the Homolka affair which indicated that he thought it would be a good idea to look into this issue. We have several statements from the minister himself indicating that the ministry was prepared to look at this. Again I cite from Hansard.

In response to one of my questions on March 19, the Attorney General said: "Certainly people at the ministry have indicated already a willingness and a desire to begin the process of setting out clearly answers to what Justice Galligan has said. They're very important." He was referring, of course, to the issue of plea bargaining. On June 6 the Attorney General indicated in a response, again to a question on plea bargaining, "The senior members in the criminal law division are working on this project and I expect they'll have guidelines prepared and dealt with."

It's now been a year, almost, since the Galligan report was released, March 15, 1996, to be exact, and we are still waiting for some guidelines with respect to plea bargaining and some clear rules as to precisely what ought to be taken into consideration by crown attorneys and how much they ought to involve victims. I remind the Attorney General that the victims' rights legislation provides for victims to be kept apprised of these issues.

Most recently, Karen Vanscoy, the mother of a 14-year-old who was murdered and in which case a plea bargain was struck, which was not what the family had wanted — it was far less severe than they had anticipated — has demanded clear guidelines. There is a public interest in having some clear, transparent guidelines that will show people exactly what is required, what is needed and will assure accountability in the justice system.

My question to the Attorney General is very simple: He says they are developing clear guidelines. We'd like to know when these guidelines are going to be presented.



**Hon Charles Harnick (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs):** I again want to express my sympathy to the Vanscoy family as a result of the tragedy and the loss they have suffered. Mr Speaker, I'd like to inform you and this Legislature that in this particular case, pursuant to the Victims' Bill of Rights, extraordinary steps were taken at all stages to ensure that the family was kept informed and that the family understood the process that was being undertaken. That is something that I know senior crown officials were involved with. Certainly the crown attorney who was involved with this case is one of the most experienced crown attorneys in the province of Ontario, and I know he did take those extraordinary steps to involve the family and to ensure the family was aware at each stage of what the process was and made extraordinary efforts so that the family could understand the process.

We have, I believe, done more for victims than the last two governments combined when we take a look at some of the initiatives this government has taken. We've passed the Victims' Bill of Rights, and I might add that the Liberal Party voted against the Victims' Bill of Rights when my colleague Cam Jackson, the member for Burlington, proposed at an early stage in a private member's bill a Victims' Bill of Rights. The Liberal Party voted against it. They had no interest in a Victims' Bill of Rights when they were the government, and they in fact voted against victims.

We have doubled the number of victim/witness assistance programs in the province of Ontario from 13 to 26 sites, and there will be further increases to that very important program that helps victims go through the court process. It is a very important program, probably the most important program that the Ministry of the Attorney General has developed for victims. It in fact is a program very much related to the kind of information that the member for Downsview is so concerned that victims receive, and that program is totally geared to the kinds of concerns the member has.

We've quadrupled the victim crisis assistance and referral service, taking that from I think five to 20 sites. That is happening throughout the course of 1997 and into 1998.

We've established a victim notification system to inform victims of the status of an offender, and we've also set up a \$500,000 community service fund so that community groups can access this fund to provide services for victims in their community.

We've set up two domestic violence courts, one in North York — the member's own riding is part of this court process — and also in downtown Toronto, so that we can better prosecute cases involving spousal abuse. We've also enshrined the victims' justice fund into the Victims' Bill of Rights to ensure that when we collect the victim fine surcharge, it goes into this fund and judges have the assurance that this money will be used to offer services for victims.

These are very important initiatives that I think, and I would hope, the member for Downsview is very supportive of, and I know she would be. They speak in a great many instances to the very concerns she raises. Other issues that she raises, such as plea bargaining, are issues that we are as a ministry taking a look at. We are looking at areas of possible law reform in terms of dealing with plea bargaining, but these are difficult and complicated matters that can't be turned around overnight.

Certainly the process is under way to review certain procedural issues and ways we can ensure that we are complying with the terms set out in the Victims' Bill of Rights to keep people informed, to make sure they understand the process, to make sure they are being heard by the administration of justice and crown attorneys.

**The Deputy Speaker:** There being no further matter to debate, I deem the motion to adjourn to be carried. This House stands adjourned until 1:30 of the clock tomorrow afternoon.

*The House adjourned at 1810.*



# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

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Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.



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No. 165

N° 165

ISSN 1180-2987

**Legislative Assembly  
of Ontario**

First Session, 36th Parliament

**Assemblée législative  
de l'Ontario**

Première session, 36<sup>e</sup> législature

**Official Report  
of Debates  
(Hansard)**

**Journal  
des débats  
(Hansard)**

**Wednesday 19 February 1997**

**Mercredi 19 février 1997**



**Speaker**  
Honourable Chris Stockwell

**Président**  
L'honorable Chris Stockwell

**Clerk**  
Claude L. DesRosiers

**Greffier**  
Claude L. DesRosiers



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# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 19 February 1997

# ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 19 février 1997

*The House met at 1331.  
Prayers.*

## MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

### MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

**Mr Alvin Curling (Scarborough North):** I rise today to inform the House of the enormously successful meeting on the megacity held in the great, thriving city of Scarborough last evening. Over 1,000 concerned citizens, businesses and ratepayers jammed the council chambers and overflowing areas to send a clear message to this conceited and pompous government, outlining their fears and concerns on this mega-assault on their democratic rights.

My leader, Dalton McGuinty, forcefully highlighted the dangers and pitfalls of this demonic downloading on to the local taxpayers and the irreparable harm this action will cause.

It was unfortunate that the Premier was unable to make time in his busy schedule to address the very real concerns and fears of the citizens, thus delegating the propaganda peddling to the member for Scarborough East, Steve Gilchrist.

This costly initiative and forced action without proper process and debate has been greeted with all the joy and euphoria of a root canal operation. This entire exercise is typical of the arrogance of this out-of-touch government. The more Mike Harris forces the downloading exercise the more organized the people of the greater Toronto area become to preserve their individual communities.

I want to thank all those for coming out and further encourage them to continue their fight. It is the galvanizing of that participation that will make the Premier understand that democracy will indeed rule the day in Scarborough.

### FIRE SAFETY

**Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold):** Thousands of people in Niagara, including folks from Welland and Thorold, have expressed their opposition and continue to do so against Bill 84, this government's attack on professional firefighting services in each and every one of our communities in this province.

People recognize that this is part of an overall plan on the part of this government to privatize valued and important public services including professional firefighting. This government has an agenda which is very much to Americanize the province of Ontario, and part of that Americanization of public services is going to be the

prospect of privatization of firefighting services. Bill 84 opens the door to privatization — make no mistake about it — and the lives and safety of communities, residents of those communities, their children, workers, seniors and firefighters' are very much at stake.

The fact is that Bill 84, as proposed by this government, is going to let big American companies come into Ontario and take over our local fire departments, just as American companies have been coming in and taking over ambulance services. Just as this government has been paying big bucks, megabucks, to American firms, be they consulting firms or highway construction firms, to come in here and take away Ontarians' jobs, Bill 84 is going to permit and invite American companies to come in and take over local firefighting services.

In the United States there has been nothing but problems and tragedy as the result of for-profit firefighting. We don't need those problems here. We in this caucus are opposed to Bill 84. We're insisting that this government take its hearings across the province so it can learn what real Ontarians think about its savage attack on firefighting services.

### JIM AND MERLE BYRNES

**Mrs Lillian Ross (Hamilton West):** I rise today to draw the attention of members to the generosity of Mr and Mrs Jim and Merle Byrnes of Hamilton, who recently donated \$25,000 to the Hamilton regional firefighters. This remarkable gift will make possible the purchase of a state-of-the-art thermal imaging camera for use in fire rescue work in the Hamilton area. The equipment allows firefighters to scan smoke-filled areas and douse small fires before they become major blazes. It also allows firefighters to locate victims who might otherwise be lost, allowing them to save lives and reduce the number of deaths.

Mr and Mrs Byrnes are not wealthy by any means. They are ordinary taxpaying individuals who wanted to contribute to their community. They are a retired couple who saw a need in the community, a community they love, and they came forward with eagerness to do their part and help out. I know I speak for all Hamiltonians when I say thank you to Mr and Mrs Byrnes for their contribution. It is very much appreciated by the Hamilton firefighters and all the community people in Hamilton-Wentworth.

### HIGHWAY SAFETY

**Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines):** The people of Ontario are becoming increasingly concerned, and justifiably so, at the unsafe conditions confronting them



on our provincial highways. Unplowed, unsalted and unsanded roads, flying tires and wheels, broken pavement and slippery surfaces face motorists who dare to venture out on to Ontario's highways in these days of senseless provincial government funding cuts. The unease and uncertainty in the minds of Ontario drivers is understandable when they read about and witness tragic accidents, some of them fatal and some of them resulting in serious injury.

It is essential that the Harris government stop leaving motorists vulnerable to damage, death and injury when they use Ontario highways in winter. When snow and sleet make our highways dangerous for motorists, the transportation ministry should ensure that plowing, salting and sanding operations begin immediately.

It's time that the Minister of Transportation converted his tough talk into tough action when it comes to dealing with flying tires and wheels. Drastically increased fines, revoked licences, vehicles removed from the roads and jail sentences for the worst offenders are needed now. Mindless funding cuts that jeopardize public safety and place lives in danger should not be sacrificed to give a tax cut to the wealthiest people in our society.

#### FIRE SAFETY

**Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South):** I want to take the opportunity today to bring back to the Legislature the concerns from the citizens of the city of Timmins that I've been getting on a very regular basis now, I would say over the last couple of months. I've received at my constituency office literally hundreds of letters, and I'll be bringing them to the House here later in debate, about Bill 84, about this government's attack on firefighters in this province and the government's attempt to move to open the door of privatization to firefighters, legislation that I think will turn the clock back in many ways, to the professional firefighters that we see today in Ontario.

Citizens are concerned. Why? Because it's an issue of public safety. People understand that firefighters offer a very, very important service to our communities in making sure that if the fire happens, they are there at our beck and call and they are there to protect us. The citizens who have been contacting me have been saying they very much wonder what's going to happen after Bill 84. The citizens of this province are very wise, as they are in Cochrane South, because they read the legislation, Bill 84, and take the time to inform themselves.

I've had a number of inquiries at my office wanting to get details on Bill 84 and all I've done is to give people copies of the legislation. People are very concerned about the direction the government is taking us vis-à-vis fire protection. So on behalf of the citizens, I ask the government to think seriously about this move that it's making on this attack against firefighters in the province.

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#### SPECIAL OLYMPICS

**Mr John Hastings (Etobicoke-Rexdale):** On behalf of all Ontarians, I want to salute and thank the thousands of volunteers from Toronto and my home town of Collingwood for making this year's Special Olympics a truly memorable event for the athletes and their families.

With a population of 12,000 people, Collingwood, like its founder, Admiral Collingwood, provided nearly 2,000 volunteers who spent hundreds of thousands of hours of their time planning and implementing every aspect of the games at Collingwood. Throughout the eight days of competition and evening social events, Collingwood lived up to its reputation as a world-renowned town excelling in tourism and hospitality.

I had the pleasure to participate by presenting some of the medals to very worthy athletes. I would like to commend all those athletes who participated in the games and the many organizers and volunteers who made the Special Olympics a success for Collingwood and Canada. My sincerest congratulations go out to everyone involved in a job well done. I am truly proud to call Collingwood my home town.

#### TOWN HALL MEETING

**Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin):** I rise today to bring to the attention of the House a letter to a local newspaper entitled "MPP Town Hall Meeting an Insult." It's an open letter to David Turnbull, MPP, York Mills, which says:

"You invited us, the residents of York Mills riding, to attend a town hall meeting on the amalgamation of Metro Toronto.

"Come and voice your opinion — speak with your MPP," stated the flyer.

"At the meeting you and your guest (assistant to the Minister of Municipal Affairs Al Leach) Steve Gilchrist, talked at us.

"You only allowed written questions, which you carefully screened.

"You emphatically stated, 'This is my meeting,' when attendees asked to verbalize and express their thoughts.

"You did not allow us to converse with you, nor voice our views.

"This evening, as I reflect on this town hall meeting of yours, I feel very unrepresented by my MPP.

"I do not believe that you are working to represent the people of York Mills when you do not allow them to speak with you.

"You and Gilchrist insulted my intelligence and made me regret that I attended your meeting."

This is a huge statement on the government's listening to the people of Ontario.

#### PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC SERVICES

**Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie):** I rise today to share with you my growing concern about the moving force of this whole phenomenon of privatization that's taken hold across this province. It's becoming the panacea for everything. I don't think people fully understand the impact it will have on communities and on families and on workers across this province. No matter how you look at it, it is a diminishing of the ability of hard-working, highly trained and very committed individuals who have spent years of their working lives training and learning how to do their job. They will in some instances not have their job any more, and in other instances, when they do have their job, by way of competing for it in the



private sector, it will not pay as much, and by that demean the contribution that person can and will and continues to make to the very fabric of life, the quality of life in our community.

When I look at the areas that are being targeted — firefighters, ambulance workers, school support staff, and the list goes on — I become very concerned. But in my community particularly the privatization of the lottery corporation is of particular concern. We're trying to diversify the economy. The lottery corporation is an important part of the industrial base of Sault Ste Marie and it will be gone if this happens.

### OPPOSITION PARTIES

**Mr Dan Newman (Scarborough Centre):** I rise today to comment on the ongoing opposition attacks to our government's Who Does What proposals. Recently the Liberal Party began its caucus tour of the province in order to hold public hearings on our government's proposed changes. It seems rather strange to me that an opposition party that held up debate on Bill 103 through political games, which simply meant a delay in holding public hearings, has suddenly become the party of the people. What nonsense.

Our government is also proposing changes to the province's education and property tax system which will benefit taxpayers in Ontario. We are proposing to take \$5.4 billion in education costs off the residential property tax base. We are working to bring greater accountability by moving local services to local government. Our proposals will improve classroom education, reduce waste and duplication, and provide better government at less cost.

But the opposition parties would like Ontarians to believe that any change would be wrong. They want the status quo. I guess I would expect no less from the NDP, but I had expected better things from the leader of the Liberals. I can remember the leader of the official opposition during the Liberal leadership race saying that the opposition cannot simply oppose everything and propose nothing.

Mr McGuinty, where are your proposals? Are you following in the flip-flop footsteps of the last Liberal leader?

**Mr Allan K. McLean (Simcoe East):** On a point of personal privilege, Mr Speaker: Yesterday in the Legislature the member for York South was asking the Minister of Health a question. The member for York South said, and I quote, "Today we learned that one of your members, the member for Simcoe East, has called his hospital and said: 'We have made mistakes. We're going to give the money back.'" I just wanted to say that is an incorrect quote.

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** That's a point of interest possibly, but not a point of privilege.

### LEGISLATIVE PAGE

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** I neglected on Monday to mention one of the pages who is here and I want to correct the record now. I don't see him, but Colin Imrie from Peterborough was neglected to be mentioned.

I want to apologize to Colin and apologize to his family. I hope he enjoys his stay.

## ORAL QUESTIONS

### HOSPITAL FINANCING

**Mr Gerard Kennedy (York South):** In the absence of the Minister of Health, I'd like to direct this question to the Premier. Premier, I'd like to talk to you about the conditions that have been created in this province by the Harris hospital cuts. I'd particularly like to bring to your attention the conditions at Peterborough Civic Hospital.

On February 5 a resident of Peterborough, Susan Kellar, and her doctor went to visit Susan Kellar's father in Peterborough Civic Hospital. They found him alone, lying on a stretcher in the bright lights of the hallway of the emergency ward where he had been for the last 24 hours. All up and down the hallway of the emergency ward are stretchers full of patients, and what they heard Ms Kellar say was, "How long has my father been lying here dead?"

Premier, Ed Whitehill was 82 years old, a member of the Sports Hall of Fame, a few months shy of his 60th wedding anniversary and deserving of the dignity of proper hospital care. This morning your minister said people could expect to get the care they need and the care they deserve. Premier, did Mr Whitehill get the care he deserved?

**Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier):** I know the Minister of Health is coming, but I'm sure he's not going to comment on any individual case in any event.

Any time somebody is hospitalized it's very traumatic for the family. When somebody dies it's very traumatic for the family and all those who are involved. If the member would like us to look into the individual case, I'm sure I can pass that to the Minister of Health and he'd be glad to do so.

If he's talking of generic policies, the very reason the NDP started hospital restructuring was to make sure we could focus resources properly. That's why we've carried on with the initiative Mr Rae started, along the way of course guaranteeing that we'd preserve the dollars for health care.

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The member will also know that we don't run hospitals and we don't deliver the services, but we do fund them. We will continue to fund health care as our predominant expenditure, continue to protect the integrity of the \$17.4 million —

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Thank you. Supplementary.

**Mr Kennedy:** Mr Premier, we need an answer from you that is better than that. We need you to deal with the reasons you and your minister ignored the warnings you got, beginning last October, from Peterborough doctors and nurses that said drastic measures had to be taken to deal with your cuts, the Harris hospital cuts; 32 beds were closed, programs were cancelled and 97 health care workers, 56 of them nurses, were laid off. You were warned that there would be noticeable differences in the care that would be available.



In this hospital, now an average of 20 to 30 persons per night lie in emergency, many on stretchers like Mr Whitehill did. These patients are often elderly, extremely ill and stay several days in a hallway where the lights remain on, where there's no privacy, where there's constant noise, which leads to further problems of confusion or weakness that can prolong their hospital stay.

We were told by the chief of staff that you knew about this. Why have you and your minister ignored the warnings —

**The Speaker:** Thank you. Premier.

**Hon Mr Harris:** Of course, as I've indicated, we do not deliver health care services. Hospitals do, and other professionals do as well. On September 22, 1996, Dalton McGuinty, now leader of your party, said: "I am convinced that there is enough money in the health care system. I don't think we're spending it as effectively as we can." We are convinced there is enough money in the system, but we don't think it's being spent as effectively as it can be. We're trying to make those changes.

I wonder if Mr McGuinty or you, as the health critic, have any suggestions on how we could do that. We'd be pleased to hear that within the budget that Mr McGuinty says is more than ample for health care.

**Mr Kennedy:** There must be a way to extend the due dignity to the legacy — unfortunately only available to us — of Mr Whitehill dying alone in an emergency hallway where he'd been for 24 hours. This Premier and this minister knew ahead of time that there were problems in their hospital cuts. They were told, and so were members of this caucus, on January 20 by the head of the OHA that their cuts were untenable, that their cuts were causing serious problems in the delivery of health care, that the third-year cut could not be done, and yet this minister persisted. The finance committee heard again today that these cuts cannot be achieved without reducing health care.

Mr Whitehill died in the conditions he died in partly because of your cuts. You were warned by the people in the Peterborough hospital, the front-line health workers, last October that this situation would emerge. Will you stand today and give an assurance that you will stop these cuts until you know at least what effect they're having on patients? Because that is your responsibility and you can't get away from it.

**Hon Mr Harris:** I'd be happy to ask the Minister of Health to look into the individual case. The member will know that his government and the NDP government closed 8,000 beds but left all that bureaucracy and infrastructure in place. We have of course been looking at and following up the NDP initiative to restructure hospitals.

The member's leader, on September 21, 1996, said, "I think clearly there's going to have to be some savings found, some efficiencies in our health care system." Could you tell us where you plan to make those savings and efficiencies so we could live within the budget that your leader said is ample there?

**The Speaker:** New question.

**Mr Joseph Cordiano (Lawrence):** I'm going to give the Premier another chance at this because it's truly

important. What happened to Mr Whitehill in the Peterborough Civic Hospital is very shocking indeed. Today we heard about a man who died in a hospital hallway, a hallway filled with 20 to 30 other patients because of your hospital cuts. Yesterday we heard of patients tied to chairs because there aren't enough nurses to care for them. Last week we heard the shocking story from Sault Ste Marie where a man was not being fed. We heard how he suffered from a severe bed rash because of a lack of nurses.

No one in this province, as rich as ours is, should have to be treated this way. Your government should be ashamed. How do you answer to the families of these patients for all their pain and suffering?

**Hon Mr Harris:** I know the Minister of Health would be pleased to respond to that.

**Hon David Johnson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Minister of Health, Government House Leader):** The Liberal Party, when it ran in the last election, said \$17 billion was enough for health care. The Progressive Conservative Party said that wasn't enough, that we would guarantee at least \$17.4 billion in health care. In actual fact, we have exceeded that; we have put \$17.7 billion into health care. Do there need to be improvements? Of course there need to be improvements.

The member opposite has indicated that some \$1.3 billion has been taken out of the health care system. Not so, incorrect, totally false. To date, there have been some administrative savings, but there have been reinvestments announced exceeding that amount of money taken out in administrative savings. At the end of the day, we will have a better health care system to serve all the people of Ontario.

**Mr Cordiano:** These are people we're talking about. I want everyone in this House to try to imagine for a second the voice of Susan Kellar screaming, "How long has my father been lying here dead?" Imagine walking into a hospital room and seeing your 89-year-old uncle naked, tied to a chair, like Mr Zukowski did. Imagine having to listen to your father scream in pain as his bed sores are wiped, as Paul Kaihla did. You have to admit these people deserve some dignity. How much pain and suffering is it going to take before you stop your reckless hospital cuts?

**Hon David Johnson:** I feel a great deal of concern for individual cases which come up and recognize, on behalf of the government, that there need to be improvements in our health care system, there need to be improvements in the hospitals. We are reinvesting as a government. We've announced some \$600 million of reinvestments to improve hospitals for cardiac care, for all aspects of kidney dialysis, every aspect of care within our hospitals.

I find it interesting that the member opposite represents a party which, when it was in government between 1988 and 1989, removed some 1,300 beds from our hospital system, removed those beds which today they are saying we desperately need. Yet they removed those beds when they were in government. What we are trying to do is make sense out of the system, make sure that our moneys are spent wisely, that our moneys are reinvested where the patients need the money to be spent.



**Mr Cordiano:** I represent the party that puts people first, a party that cares about people. That's what I represent. You were elected on a promise to protect health care. That's what Mike Harris said in the last election campaign.

**Hon Cameron Jackson (Minister without Portfolio [Seniors Issues]):** People like Patti Starr. People like Hershell Ezrin.

**The Speaker:** Order, the member for Burlington South.

**Mr Cordiano:** This is a serious matter. People are dying in hallways, people are being tied to chairs, dirty diapers left on floors, people are not receiving the basics in nursing care. That's what we're talking about in Ontario in 1997. Could it be possible? You've only just begun. What it took decades to build up, our health care system, you're destroying in just 18 months.

1400

I ask you, Minister, what's going to happen to families when your cuts reach the \$1.3-billion mark? What is their suffering going to be like then, Minister? What's it going to be like in Ontario when your cuts reach the \$1.3-billion mark?

**Hon David Johnson:** I think it's unfortunate that we play politics with individual cases when the member opposite, the member for Lawrence, represents a party which closed over 1,200 hospital beds in the province of Ontario. The member for Lawrence —

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker:** Order. Member for Kingston and The Islands, come to order. Members for York South and Lawrence, come to order.

**Mr Cordiano:** We never left people out in the hallway to die.

**The Speaker:** Member for Lawrence, I'm warning you to come to order.

**Mr Cordiano:** It's shameful what you're doing.

**The Speaker:** Member for Lawrence, I'm warning you to come to order.

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker:** Government members, Minister of Culture, please come to order. Thank you.

**Hon David Johnson:** It's embarrassing, but the member opposite represents a party that took over \$2 billion out of health care and social services in the province of Ontario and then had the nerve yesterday to put \$20 million back in.

**Mr Cordiano:** You said we were spending too much.

**The Speaker:** I'm not going to warn you again, member for Lawrence.

**Hon David Johnson:** The member opposite represents a party that took \$2 billion out of the system and put \$20 million in.

The government has indicated the spending on health care will be at least \$17.4 billion. I can guarantee you it will be beyond that and I can guarantee you at the end of the day that money will be spent wisely; that money —

**The Speaker:** Answer, please.

**Hon David Johnson:** — will be spent in terms of putting the patient first, to the services that the patients in the province of Ontario need.

## PROPERTY ASSESSMENT

**Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River):** My question is for the minister responsible for municipal affairs. I have in front of me a request for proposals that was put out on January 24. It invites private firms to do the property tax reassessment you announced last spring. On page 5 it says that the training of property tax assessors will be "approximately one day in duration." People are going to get one day of training to go out and do property tax assessment.

Ordinarily, property tax assessors take at least two years to train, but you're going to send them out there with one day's training. Minister, how can property taxpayers possibly have confidence that property assessment will be done properly when the assessors have only one day of training?

**Hon Al Leach (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing):** As the assessment falls under the Treasurer, I'll refer the question to him.

**Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance):** To the honourable leader of the third party, he knows full well that the province of Ontario is spending some \$61 million to do a reassessment of the entire province and he knows full well that this function started last summer. There have been additional people hired by the Ministry of Finance, the former Ministry of Revenue, to do the reassessment project, and there will be many local people at a local level who will be used from the private sector to assist us in this endeavour.

I believe what he's referring to is an RFP that was put out to see if there was anybody in the province who was capable of doing the entire project, and the answer to that is no. The ministry is proceeding on its own, has been proceeding since last summer, and will continue to reassess the entire province. That will be done in due course by this fall.

**Mr Hampton:** This is a request for proposals dated January 24, 1997, this is a request for proposals that is still active, and this asks for several suppliers. It says they will get one day's training to do property tax assessment. I'd say to the Minister of Finance, nice try.

The experts who've gone through assessment say it will take three years to do property tax assessment properly. University of British Columbia Professor Stanley Hamilton says the following: "I have a great fear that if the Harris government tries to do it too quickly, they're going to mess it up, and if they mess it up, they're going to mess it up for the next decade or so."

You're going to hire a bunch of assessors and give them one day's training. It's going to be Al Leach's drive-by assessment system. Minister, will you reschedule your assessment scheme so it can be done properly and taxpayers across the province can have some confidence of fairness?

**Hon Mr Eves:** I believe this question was raised before; it may even have been by the honourable member himself for his own party.

Let me explain to you the difference between British Columbia and Ontario. We happen to be in Ontario today. The year is 1997, not 1982, when BC did its reassessment scheme. The BC system — we are not adopting it as they did there. We are going to be doing a



reassessment of every property and a revaluation on an annualized basis. We're going to have a three-year rolling average, which will be much fairer than the British Columbia system, which goes up and down every year in accordance with real estate property values.

Getting back to the heart of his question, the reality is that in the overwhelming majority of Ontario they are currently on either 1984, 1988 or 1992 values. The effort required to bring those up to date is not like going back to day one, as it perhaps was in British Columbia —

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Thank you, Minister. Final supplementary.

**Mr Hampton:** I will give the Minister of Finance credit for trying to speak volumes about British Columbia. The fact is, it's your government that's out there hiring tax assessors and you're going to give them one day's training. That's what your request for proposal says — not mine, not British Columbia's, yours. You're going to give them one day's training.

We already know your reassessment scheme is behind and it's a mess. The experts who have gone through a reassessment say very clearly that what you're doing is creating a recipe for chaos: You're rushing through a province-wide reassessment with people who are inadequately trained; you're downloading close to \$2 billion in social services costs on to property taxpayers; and you're trying to shove a megacity down the throats of the people of the largest municipality in the province. It is indeed a recipe for disaster.

I ask you again, will you slow this down so people across Ontario can have a reassessment system they can have some confidence in —

**The Speaker:** Thank you. Minister of Finance.

**Hon Mr Eves:** First of all, the reassessment of the province is already more than 50% complete. The majority of the province is already done. We are asking for assistance, in certain localized areas, from local people. They won't be doing the entire reassessment, as much as you'd like the people of Ontario to believe that. They won't be. They'll be guided by Ministry of Finance staff in this function. They will be performing functions they are capable of performing, and if they're not, they won't be asked to do them.

I say to the honourable member that what we will have at the end of the day, and the people of Ontario can rest assured of this, is that for the first time in Ontario's history there will be a fair and equitable property tax system in the province where everybody will be treated the same — unlike under your government, which got to the brink of making this decision and backed off for political reasons in the city of Toronto.

#### MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

**Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River):** My next question is for the Minister of Agriculture, and I hope he has a better explanation. You will know that a new farm coalition has come together. It's called the Farmers of Ontario. It represents 36 agricultural groups, and this coalition is speaking out with a unified voice to demand no more cuts to the budget of the Ministry of Agriculture,

Food and Rural Affairs. They say your ministry budget has almost been cut in half; it has been reduced to \$250 million under the Harris government and farmers believe you're planning even deeper cuts. Minister, can you promise Ontario farmers today that there will be no more cuts to the ministry's budget and no more cuts to farm programs?

**Hon Noble Villeneuve (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, minister responsible for francophone affairs):** Yes, I had the honour of meeting the group representing 36 farm groups and we listened very carefully. Of course, they thanked us for the \$15-million Grow Ontario new money last year plus the \$20-plus-million rebate on the provincial sales tax. That's new money. Yes, there have been transfers to the University of Guelph. There has been considerable rearranging within the ministry to make it more efficient and to reduce duplication. It's a very worthwhile group. They represent the second-most important economic sector of our province, and yes, we certainly are listening.

1410

**Mr Hampton:** Minister, the farmers of Ontario were so impressed with your meeting that they issued this press release demanding no more cuts, so obviously they had a bit of a problem coming out of your meeting. They also have a bit of a problem with your election promises. This is what your government said in the 1995 election campaign: "Under a Mike Harris government, agriculture will regain its fair share of government support. That is why there are no cuts to agricultural programs in our policy plan, the Common Sense Revolution."

Farmers know that agriculture and farming has been slashed in order to provide the money to finance your tax scheme for your wealthy friends. What they want to know now, and they want to hear it from you today, is will you guarantee that there will be no further cuts to the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs and no further cuts to farm programs?

**Hon Mr Villeneuve:** It's a very interesting question. The farm tax rebate: Farmers are optimistic about tax reform. Farmers feel good about the Harris tax changes. You know, those are things we promised. Those are things you promised and you could not deliver. We have delivered on the farm tax rebate. We have delivered what we promised and there are no programs that are cut in agriculture.

**Mr Hampton:** I meet with farm leaders fairly regularly and their impression of your doing away with the farm tax rebate is that you have essentially put farmers all across this province in a position where they are being set up for tax increases. That's what you've done.

I want to go back to your promise. You said in the election campaign, "No cuts to the Ministry of Agriculture, no cuts to farm programs." You've lost nearly one half of the ministry's budget; one half of the ministry's budget has disappeared. I know what cuts are all about. I know that in fact your government has taken money from the Ministry of Agriculture and Food and you're going to give it to your wealthiest friends by means of your tax scheme.

Farmers have had enough of the promises of the past. They want a guarantee from you: no further cuts to farm



programs or to the ministry. They want that guarantee: no more rearranging. Will you give them that guarantee?

**Hon Mr Villeneuve:** It's difficult to accept from this party — a 25% cut to agriculture in the last two years they were in power. What did they do? They shut down two of our five agricultural colleges, and they have the audacity to stand in this House and trying to preach to us. Farmers are telling us they're very happy with what's happening and I will go with the farmers every time.

### CHARITY GAMING

**Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex South):** My question is to the Minister of Finance. Yesterday the Harris government took the next giant step towards putting video slot machines in every neighbourhood in this province. The government's own study by Coopers and Lybrand on the Ontario charity gaming clubs project states that the win potential in Ontario is \$977 million.

Minister, we know charities will be capped at \$180 million. Where's the rest of the money going and how much is going into the pockets of the Harris government?

**Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance):** I'm not familiar with the study. I'd refer the question to the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations.

**Hon David H. Tsubouchi (Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations):** I know my honourable friend has —

*Interjection.*

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Minister of Agriculture, if you had any more to add, I suggest you would have done it during the answer. It would have been more helpful.

**Hon Mr Eves:** You cut him off.

**The Speaker:** I didn't cut him off. He sat down. Minister.

**Hon Mr Tsubouchi:** I don't suppose it would be appropriate for me to refer my time to him.

I'm sure my friend across the way has in his hands the Coopers and Lybrand study, because that's what he's referring to. I might point out that this was based on replacing the current roving Monte Carlo situation with up to 50 permanent gaming clubs. It goes on to say as well in the summaries and results and recommendations that the province has an estimated total charitable gaming win potential, and that's clearly what this is. It is clearly a potential, clearly an estimation.

I might point out as well that the particular program we are coming forward with right now indicates that we'll have 36 full-time charity gaming clubs and eight part-time charity gaming clubs, and I would assume that we shouldn't lose sight of what actually is happening here today and that the take of the charities out of this will now expand from \$10 million to \$12 million up to about \$180 million, along with a certain amount, \$9 million, going to problem gambling as well, which the communities out there are really look forward to.

**Mr Crozier:** The minister is referring to one report that was December 1, 1996. The request for proposal is dated February 18. I would have thought if you had this under control, you would have changed the figure of the

win potential. I don't know how anybody then could base a proposal on this.

But, Minister, as you have said, we know for a fact that the charities are going to be capped at \$180 million, we know that the potential is \$977 million, and you're telling us that these casinos are for charity, but it looks like your government is the biggest charity case of them all.

If introducing 44 permanent casinos and 20,000 video slot machines in the province is to benefit charities, why don't you become more charitable, and rather than taking 90% of the pie, why don't you give charities the biggest slice of the pie?

**Hon Mr Tsubouchi:** First of all, my honourable friend made reference to the Coopers and Lybrand report and is suggesting that we change somehow a number that's in this report. It would be highly inappropriate for us to do that.

**Mr Crozier:** I said change the request for proposal.

**Hon Mr Tsubouchi:** I would like to suggest —

**Mr Crozier:** Answer the question.

**The Speaker:** Member for Essex South, I appreciate that you want an answer to your question, but you've got to listen if you're going to get an answer.

**Hon Mr Tsubouchi:** I know my honourable friend is usually pretty good at listening, so I would compliment him on it.

But let's take a look and see what exactly we're doing here today. We're replacing a system that came in under the Peterson Liberals, the three-day roving casinos that had absolutely no accountability whatsoever. The problem has been, and we've heard and every member in this House has heard, that the charities at the end of these three-day roving casinos benefit sometimes not one cent — sometimes they're in the hole — and that is totally unacceptable. Now we're looking at increasing the charities' share from about \$10 million to \$12 million up to \$180 million. Certainly this government has done more for charities in this initiative than they have done before in the past with these three-day roving casinos.

**The Speaker:** New question.

**Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie):** My question is to the same minister on the same subject. Yesterday, Minister, in your announcement, you foisted permanent charity casinos on communities across Ontario. You've said over and over that you would let communities vote on whether they want to have more casinos, yet here you go again imposing without consultation.

1420

Mel Lastman has said no to these casinos in North York, Mayor Barbara Hall said bylaws forbid them in Toronto, yet your announcement includes several permanent casinos in both of these cities. So instead of referendum and thoughtful planning, we have imposition. Why will you persist in your hypocrisy and arrogance by imposing gambling on communities? When will you let communities have input, as you promised? Will you let them have a say?

**Hon Mr Tsubouchi:** I would like to point out to my honourable friend that what we are doing is replacing a system that did not work — the three-day roving casinos — with a system that will work; a system that was totally



unaccountable and totally irresponsible with a system that has a high level of accountability; a system that only sometimes provided revenue to charities with a system that will now provide around \$180 million to charity.

These mayors should certainly know that we are replacing a system with a new system. Without that vehicle, how will charities in their areas benefit? I would like to point out that last year Toronto held 619 events, approximately 1,600 days. That's almost five of these going per day. Clearly, this is simply a replacement of these vehicles that did not work.

**Mr Martin:** That's a red herring. My community of Sault Ste Marie has had a referendum on this issue and they want a casino, but not this kind of casino. Your announcement yesterday shows, to quote from a recent editorial in the Sault Star, "unbelievable hypocrisy and inconsistency on the part of the government" and it shows "an irritating and disturbing lack of concern for the economic wellbeing of Sault Ste Marie."

This is not the strategic, measured, controlled process we need for developing full-fledged casinos to ensure that they are viable and safe additions to our communities. The spread of many casinos opens the door to organized crime. You are ignoring the concerns raised about VLTs. You are exposing our communities to crime.

The CISO report shows that illegal gambling flourishes in Ontario and there is potential for abuse in the legal gaming sector. You have ignored these reports. You are ignoring these communities that want input into these decisions. Why aren't you listening? This is not what they want.

**Hon Mr Tsubouchi:** If I might be allowed to answer that sequence of questions somehow, this is really a question coming from a party which introduced the casino concept within Ontario without providing a lot of the supports it was really necessary to have.

I look at some of the concerns the member has, but I think he forgets that when his government brought in the Ontario gaming commission, they brought in a certain number of safeguards to crack down on a lot of the illegal crime and concerns the member has. I guess he's forgotten these things. We have followed through and continued on and tried to put in more supports to fight these types of illegal activities. In fact, we're allocating around \$7 million to assist. We're bringing the number of officers involved with this up to 35 from six; we're bringing in special prosecutors just to prosecute illegal gambling, forensic experts and assistants to do that, because we believe we should crack down and make sure we protect the community.

#### TAX REBATES

**Mr Allan K. McLean (Simcoe East):** My question is for the Minister of Natural Resources. As part of our government's commitment to bringing fairness back to the tax system in Ontario, the Minister of Finance announced the removal of education from the municipal tax base, thereby freeing billions of dollars for municipalities to spend on programs of local importance. Private property owners in my riding are very interested in changes to the tax system concerning woodlots and

conservation lands. Could the minister comment on the proposed changes to the managed forest tax rebate program and the conservation land tax rebate program?

**Hon Chris Hodgson (Minister of Natural Resources, Northern Development and Mines):** I'd like to thank the honourable member for the question. It's a very important issue to all those in Ontario who care about the environment. This government has announced that for eligible managed forest lands there will be a 25% tax rate, a special class, and for conservation lands that have provincial significance there will be no property taxes. This is to recognize, as Ontarians have recognized for almost a quarter of a century, that there was an inherent unfairness in the property tax system that has treated property that was owned and had trees on it unfairly related to other properties, and made it unsustainable or unaffordable to keep that land with forests on it.

This government has made these changes to reduce the red tape of issuing rebates and the uncertainty that the private property owners would have to go and beg the Ontario government each year to maintain their forested lands or their provincially significant conservation lands.

**Mr McLean:** The NDP claimed to be concerned about the environment, yet they cancelled these programs when they were in government. How will the changes in our government policy have an effect on the environment?

**Hon Mr Hodgson:** As most people in Ontario know, the managed forest tax rebate was introduced in 1975, and although the NDP claimed in all their party propaganda that they cared about the environment, they chose to cancel this program because they had other spending priorities. The minister at the time is the present leader of the third party and they cancelled this for other spending priorities.

Our Premier, Mike Harris, recognized the unfairness in the property tax system and the importance to the environment of maintaining and managing our managed forests on private lands. That's why we made a campaign commitment in the Mike Harris Task Force on Rural Economic Development. I'm pleased to say to the member who asked the question and to all those people in Ontario that we've lived up to another campaign promise, and that is very beneficial to the environment and to the future of Ontario.

#### GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING

**Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor-Sandwich):** My question is for the Premier. I would like you to help me understand how you could launch health ads at a public expense of \$650,000 at the same time as hearing the most disturbing stories of terrible health care in Ontario.

**Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier):** You call an ad agency, you explain to them what you are trying to do and they come back with a program to help explain to the public how much better their health care system will be after we make the changes than it was before.

**Mrs Pupatello:** Premier, I cannot believe your answer —

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Order. Government members, I can't hear the question. And opposition



members as well. It's awfully noisy today. If you'd come to order, I'd appreciate it.

*Interjection.*

**The Speaker:** Member for Cochrane South, come to order means we stop heckling. Member for Windsor-Sandwich.

**Mrs Papatello:** Premier, I cannot believe your answer in this House today. On February 6 we asked the Deputy Minister of Health what plans she knew of for health care ads and she said: "I don't know what you're talking about. I don't know what you're referring to in terms of ads." Premier, this lands on your desk. How dare you spend taxpayers' money, \$650,000, while Mr Whitehill dies in the hallway. Make me understand this, Premier.

**Hon Mr Harris:** This is a question from the party that right before an election spent \$1.5 million advertising a flawed card plan that had to be cancelled after the election.

**Mrs Papatello:** You're responsible for —

**The Speaker:** Member for Windsor-Sandwich, I'm warning you to come to order. Please. Member for Brantford, it would be helpful if you were in your seat. Premier.

**Hon Mr Harris:** This party and this government do not need to get a lecture from a party that spent three times more than we are spending on government advertising, wasted money on a government card that was totally unacceptable, and spent more money advertising things they didn't do than things they did.

Yes, even though we have slashed the advertising budget in half from the NDP, even though we've slashed the budget by two thirds from what the Liberals spent on government advertising, we are informing Ontarians with a minimal amount of money of a new vision for a comprehensive health care plan and we're inviting them to share, and their participation, in how we can correct the disaster of the last 10 years.

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker:** I appreciate the fact that members are somewhat more lively today, it happens on Wednesdays, but the fact remains that I understand it's upsetting when you're being heckled from either side, but no side is perfect. When this side's up, that side's heckling, and vice versa. It would be helpful if you would —

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker:** Yes, I'm beginning to think that's happening more and more. I would ask you to come to order.

1430

## OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

**Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre):** My question is to the Minister of Labour. My question today relates to whether or not a worker's right to refuse unsafe work is going to be protected under this government. At CAMI Automotive in Ingersoll, a worker exercised his right to refuse to continue working with a piece of equipment he believed to be dangerous. Amazingly, and in violation of the law, he was suspended by the company. Ministry of Labour officials rightly filed charges against the company under the Occupational Health and

Safety Act. Although in the first round in front of a justice of the peace they lost, your officials did assure the Canadian Auto Workers union that they would pursue this case under appeal.

The deadline is tomorrow. The union is extremely concerned that you're going to abandon this worker and his right to refuse unsafe work. Minister, will you stand in your place today and give assurances that you will not abandon this worker's right and that you will pursue this case under appeal and file the proper charges before the deadline expires?

**Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Labour):** To the member opposite, I think I've made it abundantly clear that we are presently reviewing the Occupational Health and Safety Act. I have stood in this place on many occasions and have indicated to you that we are prepared and will continue to allow within the act the right to refuse unsafe work. I would also indicate to you that if you take a look at our record of enforcement, if you take a look at our inspections in the workplace, our endeavours to make the workplaces safe, we have actually increased our inspections in 1995-96 by 35%. We have a very, very strong commitment to ensure the workplaces are safe.

**Mr Christopherson:** In response to those hollow words that you've given time after time, I've accused you of not backing up those words with any action. When we look at your track record of how you've attacked the rights of workers, particularly the area of health and safety, I believe our arguments on this side are the ones that are correct.

Today you've got a chance to put some action and some truth behind what you claim is a sincere concern for workers in the workplace. I'm asking you a very specific question: Will you assure us that you will not abandon this worker's right to refuse unsafe work and that you will indeed file the papers to ensure that we continue with the appeal? Put action behind your words, Minister.

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** To the member opposite, I am well aware of the situation about which you speak. I understand the worker has indeed sought a remedy under the grievance procedure of his collective agreement, but you also know, since this is the subject of a grievance proceeding, that I am not in a position to make any further comment on this specific issue other than to give you my assurance that the right to refuse unsafe work will remain a very basic part of the legislation.

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** New question.

**Mrs Lillian Ross (Hamilton West):** My question is also to the Minister of Labour, following on the question from the member for Hamilton Centre on your commitment to occupational health and safety.

I know that you recently announced a review of the Occupational Health and Safety Act. In my riding of Hamilton West, I've received several calls and letters from constituents asking how they might add their voice to that review and comment on what's in that review. Can you please tell this House and all members of this House, clarify how their constituents can also provide comment on that act?



**Hon Mrs Witmer:** To the member for Hamilton West, yes, as the member has indicated, approximately two weeks ago we initiated a review of the Occupational Health and Safety Act. As you probably know, the act had not been totally reviewed for the past 19 years, so we are going to take a look at how the act can better respond to the changing needs of the workplace. We're going to be taking a look at the issue of whether or not sexual harassment should be included within the legislation; we're going to take a look at the issue of the right to refuse unsafe work, to make sure that the right is appropriately handled and that it is appropriately administered. We'll take a look at the hours of work. We have identified within our paper 31 issues, but certainly we would invite the stakeholders to contribute any information and any response they would deem appropriate.

**Mrs Ross:** Could the minister please tell this House what the reaction has been so far to the release of this paper?

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** I am pleased to indicate to the House that we've had a very positive response. I had an opportunity yesterday to meet with some people from unions in eastern Ontario and we had a very good discussion on some of the issues we are addressing. I was also pleased to read today in the editorial of the Sudbury Star that it indicates this planned review of the act is long overdue. They mention that the act has been refined, but has never been the subject of this type of comprehensive review. They indicate it's clearly needed because of the workplace changes.

We're taking a look to ensure that at the end of the day the workplaces in Ontario are among the safest in the world. That's our objective and with the cooperation of all stakeholders I know we can achieve that goal.

#### TRUCK SAFETY

**Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-Walkerville):** I have a question for the Minister of Transportation. Minister, I wonder if you could take a moment today in the House and elaborate on what initiatives you plan to undertake with respect to the enforcement of safer trucks on Ontario highways.

**Hon Al Palladini (Minister of Transportation):** I want to thank the honourable member for the question. I know he's as concerned as this government is concerned and as I am concerned on how we can make our highways safer. I believe since October 1995 a lot has happened as far as changes in our highways, as far as trucks are concerned. I believe we have implemented some very positive things, from higher fines to legislating wheel installers and allowing drivers to adjust their own air brakes, and hiring additional enforcement officers.

One of the things I believe our ministry has done an excellent job of is pulling over a lot more vehicles over the course of our fiscal year, nearly twice as many as any other government has done in the past. We are presently in the mode of putting additional enforcement in place for our spring —

*Interjection.*

**Hon Mr Palladini:** I can certainly tell the honourable member that we are going to continue to make sure we get things done.

**Mr Duncan:** Enforcement is the problem. The OPP are saying that, the Canadian Automobile Association is saying that, most other groups that have taken an interest in these issues are saying that. In fact you have provided an additional \$200,000 on a budget of \$22 million for enforcement.

The OPP are saying that the best method of enforcement is roving inspection stations; that is, where trucks don't know where inspection stations are going to be from day to day, that they make a lot more sense than the stationary stations you have on Ontario highways. Will you commit today to providing additional mobile inspection stations throughout this province, and will you commit today to spending the kind of money it's going to take to give Ontario motorists the reassurance they need that their highways are indeed safe and that Ontario's roads will be safer? You've had more incidents with truck wheels than ever before.

**Hon Mr Palladini:** I know the honourable member means well, but I made that commitment on June 26, 1995, when I was sworn in as Minister of Transportation. One of the things that has happened throughout this short time is that a lot of input has been given by concerned parties, including OPP officers, including CAA, including shippers and all people who have an interest in making sure our highways are safe.

I want to say to the honourable member that as far as the mobile stations you're referring to are concerned, you're absolutely right and that's something we've already looked at before the honourable member even talked about it. We have a lot of things in place that I am sure the honourable member will agree will make Ontario's roads safe.

1440

#### HOSPITAL RESTRUCTURING

**Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre):** My question is to the Minister of Health. In July 1994, our NDP government approved funding of \$12 million to replace the 70-year-old south wing at St Peter's chronic care hospital in Hamilton. Your government agreed with our decision and gave approval on February 28, 1996, to excavate the site. In fact, you've already paid your half of that cost. Unbelievably, on January 28 of this year, your government halted construction at St Peter's Hospital.

This is not expansion. These are not new beds. They're replacing 80 beds in a building that is in absolutely deplorable physical condition. For this reason, people at St Peter's Hospital and people across Hamilton are concerned that what you're really going to do is cut the number of chronic care beds in our community. Is that what's really going on here?

**Hon David Johnson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Minister of Health, Government House Leader):** I will assure the member for Hamilton Centre that what is going on is a concern for the best interests of the patients in Hamilton. I have discussed this matter with Mr Carruthers, the CEO, and intend to have a site visit in the near future.



What I will say is that the restructuring commission, as we all know, will be going into Hamilton in the very near future. The restructuring commission wants the opportunity to look at all of the hospital services needed in Hamilton and to make sure it has the best fit for that particular community. I'm not able to prejudge what the commission may come up with. Indeed, the commission may say we need more than 80 beds, we need 100 beds, we need some different configuration which will best serve the community. My intent is to encourage the commission to get on with the job, to speed it up and to come forward with a resolution to make everybody happy.

**Mr Christopherson:** I'm afraid that doesn't wash because, first of all, this is the only total chronic care hospital not only in Hamilton but in the entire catchment area of over two million people. Secondly, your approval to begin the excavation was given after you had legislative approval for your commission restructuring. So either you're guilty of planning to cut back the number of chronic care beds in Hamilton or you're guilty of incompetent planning.

In either event, we've now got a 20-foot hole the size of a football field in Hamilton, and I've got a picture to show you, that is leaving the children in that neighbourhood — we've got three schools in the immediate residential neighbourhood — vulnerable to accident. You had the audacity in a letter to them to say to the hospital, "By the way, make sure that you take care of the safety problems." None of this is good enough. None of your answer adequately explains what's going on.

Minister, will you announce today that you're going to continue the funding so we can get rid of this danger: this danger to patients, danger to staff and danger to neighbourhood children?

**Hon David Johnson:** I think the members on this side of the House find it humorous to be accused by the third party of incompetent planning. This is the party, this is the government, that built a waiting list of over \$2 billion worth of capital improvements and yet allocated less than \$200 million a year. No funding; built up a huge waiting list of health capital projects and then didn't fund them. That was the NDP.

What this government is doing, and I have a great deal of sympathy for St Peter's Hospital, is planning this in an organized fashion. The restructuring commission will go in shortly, have a look, determine what is the best configuration, which may indeed be more beds — there may be more chronic beds; there is certainly no plan to reduce the number of chronic beds — come forward with those recommendations and deliver the best possible hospital services to the people of Hamilton.

#### SPECIAL OLYMPICS

**Mr Jim Brown (Scarborough West):** My question is directed to the Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation. Minister, your ministry helped fund the highly successful Special Olympics. The Special Olympics saw 2,000 athletes from 80 countries come to Ontario. Also attending to watch and support the athletes

were over 700 coaches, 6,000 volunteers and thousands of supporters and family members.

John Scott, the chairman of the games, spoke to me and recognized your ministry's contributions to the games. Would you please tell the House about your ministry's involvement and assure us that your ministry will remain supportive of and committed to the needs of special athletes?

**Hon Marilyn Mushinski (Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation):** I'd like to thank the honourable member for Scarborough West for his question and also for his own personal commitment to the recently completed Special Olympics. In fact, as the member has already indicated, this government is very proud of its participation in this very successful event. Indeed, it was the best games ever.

Although the games have concluded, I want to assure the member that our commitment to the disabled athlete has not. For example, in the upcoming Ontario games, as well as the 2001 Canada Summer Games that will be held in this province, there will be competitions in swimming and track and field for athletes with disabilities.

**Mr Jim Brown:** The provincial government made a great financial contribution to the games. Could you please inform the House what other groups were involved in making the games the great success they were?

**Hon Ms Mushinski:** A major highlight, of course, of these games was the contributions made by the volunteers, the sponsors and the communities of Collingwood, Duntroon and Metro Toronto. Indeed, one of three people in Collingwood participated in making these games a huge success. They should be congratulated for that. To all those who volunteered their time, their efforts and their resources, including the members in this House, the government thanks you, but more important, the athletes thank you.

#### NIAGARA PARKS COMMISSION

**Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines):** I have a question for the Minister of Tourism, and it relates to the Niagara Parks Commission, which has been an outstanding success for so many years.

The Niagara Parks Commission has ensured that we've had very careful development in the area of Niagara Falls. It has ensured that there's a lot of green space, a lot of greenery, trees. It is something that has been hailed by many people, and it has controlled the kind of development that would make an area simply a honky-tonk area or a tourist trap; in other words, it has made it more attractive than many other potential tourist areas.

I'm asking the minister, when we have such a successful operation, established by a previous Conservative government, why would you now want to privatize and turn over to the private sector the Niagara Parks Commission and allow for the potential of the kind of development that would be detrimental to Niagara Falls and the surrounding area rather than beneficial?

**Hon William Saunderson (Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism):** I'd like to say that what we are proposing is to study all agencies, boards



and commissions for which we are responsible and to make sure that what is being done with those agencies, boards and commissions is being done in the most favourable way for the taxpayers of Ontario. If there's a way that any aspect of these agencies, boards and commissions can be done better by having more private sector involvement, I think that is very good for the taxpayers.

I agree with the member that the Niagara Parks Commission is one of our treasures, and we have many great facilities there, such as the new butterfly conservatory that was just opened.

What we're trying to do, though, is that if there's a chance for the private sector to be more involved, which would save the taxpayers of Ontario, we think that's the way to look at these agencies, boards and commissions.

**Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor-Sandwich):** On a point of privilege, Mr Speaker: I would ask you for a ruling if you could. Today in question period I quoted the Deputy Minister of Health, who pointed, on February 6, being totally unaware of health ads. Given that the preparation for those ads happened some time before, I've got to ask the Speaker to rule on the appropriateness of the political arm of the Premier's office absconding with ministry funds that the deputy would not be aware of. If there is another place —

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** No.

**Mr Bradley:** I think it's a good question.

**The Speaker:** The member for St Catharines thinks it's a good point of privilege, and I'm not surprised about that. Frankly speaking, I'm willing to hear you out on that, but I'm not really sure how that is a point of privilege or point of order with respect to the "absconding" of funds.

1450

**Mrs Pupatello:** Mr Speaker, it's clear by the Premier's answer today that he was well aware of the process in developing the television ads. In the question put today it was specifically related to something other than that; it was rationalizing the expense of taxpayers' money. But the point of —

**The Speaker:** Let me be clear, though. You're very close yourself right now, in the suggestion you've made with respect to the absconding of funds and so on, to being out of order. Now, there isn't a point of order; it doesn't come under any privilege.

I'll ask you, if you'd like, to raise it tomorrow and come back to me and give me the heading on privilege that you want to file this under, but let me stop first and say, be very careful about the words you've chosen to use. They're very powerful words.

## PETITIONS

### NORTH YORK BRANSON HOSPITAL

**Mr Monte Kwinter (Wilson Heights):** I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the final report of the Metropolitan Toronto District Health Council hospital restructuring committee

has recommended that North York Branson Hospital merge with York-Finch hospital; and

"Whereas this recommendation will remove emergency and inpatient services currently provided by North York Branson Hospital, which will seriously jeopardize medical care and the quality of health for the growing population which the hospital serves, many being elderly people who in numerous cases require treatment for life-threatening medical conditions;

"We petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reject the recommendation contained within the final report of the Metropolitan Toronto District Health Council hospital restructuring committee as it pertains to North York Branson Hospital, so that it retains, at minimum, emergency and inpatient services."

I have affixed my signature.

## MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

**Mr Dan Newman (Scarborough Centre):** I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the city of Scarborough is requiring individuals who want to participate in the mail-in referendum to provide their name, address and signature on the ballot; and

"Whereas this requirement is blatantly undemocratic and threatens the legitimacy of the democratic process; and

"Whereas the city of Scarborough makes no mention as to whether or not it will accept ballots from residents who wish to vote in confidence; and

"Whereas the question on the ballot itself is slanted towards the position of the city and cannot be viewed as a neutral question; and

"Whereas this uncertainty and undemocratic procedure makes the entire process a great misuse of taxpayers' dollars and tarnishes any results that will come out of the vote;

"Therefore, be it resolved that we, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario to

"(1) Speak out against this undemocratic vote;

"(2) Disregard the results of the vote; and

"(3) Continue with the proposed unification of municipalities into one unified city of Toronto."

## HOSPITAL FINANCING

**Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor-Sandwich):** I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas Ontarians are gravely concerned with the historic \$1.3-billion cuts to base funding of hospitals; and

"Whereas Ontarians feel that health services are suffering; and

"Whereas the government is reducing hospital funding and not reinvesting millions of dollars into the communities that they are being taken away from;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly to call on the Conservative government to stop the cuts to base funding for hospitals across Ontario and to ensure that community services are in place before the removal of hospital services. The Conservative government must fund hospitals with a funding formula that



reflects demographic and regional needs. The Conservative government must ensure that health services are available, including emergency and urgent care, to all Ontarians."

I add my signature.

### MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

**Mr John L. Parker (York East):** I have a petition addressed to the Legislature of Ontario. It reads as follows:

"Whereas 'bigger government is not better' and the Mike Harris government has no right to dictate a megacity upon the citizens of Metro Toronto;

"Whereas the megacity is being imposed on 2.3 million citizens in Metro Toronto without giving people a voice in the future of their cities and neighbourhoods;

"Whereas a megacity could lead to mega property tax increases, mega user fees and mega cuts in services;

"Whereas the Tories never proposed abolishing local government in favour of bigger government during the election campaign;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario as follows:

"To give the 2.3 million people in Metro Toronto a say in the future of their cities and stop the imposition of a megacity."

**Ms Annamarie Castrilli (Downsview):** A petition to the Legislature of Ontario:

"Whereas 'bigger government is not better' and the Mike Harris government has no right to dictate a megacity upon the citizens of Metro Toronto;

"Whereas the megacity is being imposed on 2.3 million citizens in Metro Toronto without giving people a voice in the future of their cities and neighbourhoods;

"Whereas a megacity could lead to mega property tax increases, mega user fees and mega cuts in services;

"Whereas the Tories never proposed abolishing local government in favour of bigger government during the election campaign;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario as follows:

"To give the 2.3 million people in Metro Toronto a say in the future of their cities and stop the imposition of a megacity."

I'm happy to sign my name.

### WCB PREMIUMS

**Mrs Barbara Fisher (Bruce):** I'd like to present a petition this afternoon on behalf of my riding constituents. It relates to dignity, rights and respect.

"We, the undersigned, protest that quality of care for the residents in nursing homes and homes for the aged is being sacrificed in order to pay for the increases in WCB premiums. Workers in these facilities are being laid off and their hours have been reduced to pay for these increases.

"We demand that the Harris government find immediate funds to ensure that quality of care is not further compromised and that no worker is either laid off or has their hours reduced in order to pay for an increase in WCB premiums."

I'll attach my name to the front.

### RENT REGULATION

**Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-Walkerville):** I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the Rent Control Act protects Ontario's 3.3 million tenants and allows for security and stability in their homes and communities; and

"Whereas lifting rent control in Ontario would leave tenants with uncontrollable rent increases and financial instability; and

"Whereas the Progressive Conservative government is proposing changes to the Landlord and Tenant Act favouring easier and faster eviction by landlords;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to save rent control."

This is signed by a number of my constituents at 8575 Riverside Drive East in Windsor, Shoreline Towers, and I'm pleased to affix my signature to this petition.

### HOSPITAL FINANCING

**Mr Ted Chudleigh (Halton North):** In spite of the reinvestment in health care that this government has made, I have a petition here.

"Whereas Ontario is gravely concerned with our historic \$1.3-billion cuts to the base funding of hospitals; and

"Whereas Ontarians feel that health services are suffering; and

"Whereas the government is reducing hospital funding and not reinvesting millions of dollars into the communities that they are being taken away from;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly to call on the Conservative government to stop the cuts to base funding to hospitals across Ontario and to ensure that community services are in place before the removal of hospital services. The Conservative government must fund hospitals with a funding formula that reflects demographic and regional needs. The Conservative government must ensure that health services are available, including emergency and urgent care for all Ontarians."

### MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

**Mr Mario Sergio (Yorkview):** This petition is addressed to the Legislature and comes from residents of Ontario.

"Whereas 'bigger government is not better' and the Mike Harris government has no right to dictate a megacity upon the citizens of Metro Toronto;

"Whereas the megacity is being imposed on 2.3 million citizens in Metro Toronto without giving people a voice in the future of their cities and neighbourhoods;

"Whereas a megacity could lead to mega property tax increases, mega user fees and mega cuts in services;

"Whereas the Tories never proposed abolishing local government in favour of bigger government during the election campaign;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario as follows:

"To give the 2.3 million people in Metro Toronto a say in the future of their cities and stop the imposition of a megacity."



I agree with the content of the petition and I will affix my signature to it.

**Mr John L. Parker (York East):** I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It reads as follows:

"Whereas the borough of East York is requiring voters in the current mail-in referendum to return their ballots in envelopes bearing their names and addresses; and

"Whereas the ballots are to be forwarded to the borough of East York at the East York Civic Centre and not to an independent elections commission; and

"Whereas the East York council has declared itself in favour of a particular result in the referendum; and

"Whereas the question itself is prejudicial in its wording and clearly slanted towards the result favoured by council; and

"Whereas all of the above factors violate well-established and universally acknowledged principles of a free democratic referendum process;

"Therefore, be it resolved that we, the undersigned, petition the Ontario Legislature to:

"(1) Speak out against the current flawed, undemocratic referendum in East York;

"(2) Disregard the results of the vote; and

"(3) Proceed with the government's program to provide for Toronto's future through the creation of one Toronto for all of us."

#### INTERGENERATIONAL COMMUNITY PROJECT

**Mr Bernard Grandmaître (Ottawa East):** To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the PACE 2000 Foundation, a non-profit organization, is planning to build a residential community for seniors and mature students on the undeveloped lands directly north of Montfort Hospital; and

"Whereas the objectives of the PACE 2000 Foundation are to help seniors live longer in their homes and to help students acquire professional expertise and social support, and that it will be achieved with the support of the intergenerational network which promotes the interaction between seniors and students in a complementary approach; and

"Whereas Les Filles de la Sagesse, l'Hôpital Montfort and PACE 2000 Foundation have submitted a joint application for the rezoning of this 21-acre site (from the actual institutional P to residential R5) on January 26, 1996, and whereas by January 28, 1997, the rezoning has still not been granted by the city of Ottawa; and

"Whereas since May 1996, 510 signatories are asking that the PACE 2000 project be implemented as soon as possible on these lands;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To grant highest priority to the municipal and provincial agreements which are required for the development of the PACE 2000 intergenerational community project on the lands directly north of Montfort Hospital, before the implementation of the city's new zoning bylaw."

I have affixed my signature.

1500

#### ORDERS OF THE DAY

##### POLICE SERVICES AMENDMENT ACT, 1997

##### LOI DE 1997 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES SERVICES POLICIERS

Resuming the adjourned debate on the motion for second reading of Bill 105, An Act to renew the partnership between the province, municipalities and the police and to enhance community safety / Projet de loi 105, Loi visant à renouveler le partenariat entre la province, les municipalités et la police et visant à accroître la sécurité de la collectivité.

**Mr Gary Carr (Oakville South):** I would like to add a few words to the bill as it proceeds and goes to committee.

For those who do not know this bill, it deals with the financing of policing and it deals with the governance issue. Before we get going I'd like to take a quick minute to thank all the members of the ministry for their fine work in putting together this bill. I'm looking forward to the opportunity of taking it out on committee and hearing from some people across the province. It will mean some of the most major changes that have happened in policing in this province in some time.

It has been a while since we've reviewed the issue of policing in the province. I had the opportunity, as parliamentary assistant to the Solicitor General, of spending some time in early summer dealing with the various groups looking at this bill.

We had an opportunity to meet with the various groups across the province involved in policing: the Ontario Association of Police Services Boards, the Police Association of Ontario, the Ontario Senior Officers Association, as well as the Association of Municipalities. During that process, the summit as we called it, we had an opportunity to hear from all sides on the major issues we'll be dealing with, which of course are financing, governance and oversight of policing in this province.

I must say, there were some exchanges that were very forthright on all sides. Everybody knew where everybody was coming from. Regardless of what happened in the end and how people feel about the bill, I think it was a good process to be able to hear from people on this particular subject.

On the issue of financing I would like to say that this is probably going to be a difficult area. As you know, there are municipalities right now that are not paying for policing. All governments of all political stripes have dealt with this issue, and for the first time we are dealing with that.

As we said back in June, the whole issue of municipal governance came up. It isn't surprising that as a result of that the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, AMO, was in favour of more control over policing, and it's no secret that some of the other groups were not. But during that process we heard from various groups and we put together what we think is a bill which will be to the benefit of the people of this province.



On the issue of governance the municipalities will maintain options for local choice and delivery of police services in their community. They will be given the authority to set police budgets, and Mr Speaker, having a background as a member of the police services board, you will know that had been some area of contention with the municipalities. Policing had been a big part of the budget, a very big part of most of their budgets, and they did not control them. As a result of these changes, municipalities will have greater accountability and control over policing in their areas.

I know this is something many people have talked about. Municipalities have said that when it's a big part of their budget, they should have some say, and I agree to some extent with what came out in some of the hearings from some of the municipal people. We had people from Toronto. We had people from northern Ontario. It was a pretty good cross-section of people.

There were some concerns voiced that somehow the province would need to maintain a lot of control, although I'm one of those who — and the Premier has said this on many occasions, relating to the whole issue of municipal politicians making the decision, and it's no secret that the Premier has said this: "Why would the people in their community care any less about what is happening in their community than people at Queen's Park?" To some extent, that was the thrust that came out from the people in AMO. They were saying very clearly: "We are in that area. We live in that area. We have as much concern about policing in that area as the people at Queen's Park or the MPPs." I can understand where the debate was coming from.

In a lot of areas, the policing community was worried that municipal control will create some problems. What we've attempted to do is put together a bill that would take all this into consideration. I hope we've done a good job.

On the issue of financing as part of this, when we did our whole issue of policing at the summit we didn't have an opportunity of knowing what some of the changes coming forward from, as it's known, the Who Does What would be. When the financing issue came up about municipalities paying, it wasn't within the whole structure of having municipalities now pay a bigger portion of welfare and long-term-care costs. Some of the concerns at the time about financing have obviously been heightened with some of the changes that have happened recently.

I think everybody in this province believes it should be fair and equitable, that everybody should pay for policing in the province. Having said that, it is a lot easier said than done, because as you know, in some areas that haven't paid for policing, the cost of policing will be very difficult in areas that have not had the opportunity of paying for it.

The nicest part about this job was having the opportunity to meet with some of these people. The exchanges were forthright — I will say this very clearly — and all the members spoke very strongly on behalf of their own people, and we've come up with a bill that we believe will be for the betterment of the people of this province. Having said that, I'm looking forward to the public hearing process and I'm looking forward to hearing from the various critics from the parties opposite.

I will say this: In the past bills I've been involved with in fire services, and I said this to the member for London Centre when she was speaking on it, we really appreciated the input coming forward. No matter how hard you work on bills, no matter how much time you spend with the various people involved in this, there are things that do come up, and that's why the process of listening to the opposition and having public hearings is a good one.

The one issue that I think was fairly easy was that of oversight. I know that what we ended up coming up with may have been fairly contentious to a lot of people, but the amendments were probably one of the few things agreed upon by all people at the summit. The amendments will cut the number of discipline/oversight agencies in half. This will allow for a simpler, more accountable new system. Meanwhile, of course the special investigations unit will remain as it is, to ensure the independence and impartial investigation of cases involving serious injury or death.

It wasn't the fault of any government or any political party. What happened was that the oversight had been built up through years of regulations and through a lot of changes, and what we have attempted to do is to help modernize and streamline and simplify an oversight system that is more responsible and accountable to the public. We believe the amendments are a result of many of the reviews and of the hard work that has been done by the policing community, by the public and by municipalities.

1510

Just for those members who aren't familiar, in December 1995 the Solicitor General announced a comprehensive review and the provisions he asked be looked for in that review were providing more efficient and cost-effective delivery, ensuring all municipalities contribute to the cost of policing in their communities, and providing greater fiscal accountability at the local level, as well as providing police services with greater flexibility in deploying resources.

We also wanted to reduce the administrative and operational overlap and duplication, and we wanted — obviously as all members would want — to ensure adequate levels of policing throughout all parts of the province.

The whole issue of the review of policing had been tackled by various governments of all political stripes. We also set up a working committee of ministry officials and representatives from the associations I mentioned who participated in the summit we established as a result and began at the end of August 1996, and the input from these stakeholders was very important. I will tell you that at those ministry level discussions everybody put everything on the table with respect to their own particular views.

We also, since that time, have had a look at the Who Does What panel established by the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing in 1996 and we were able to take a look at some of the review that came from the outside as part of that process.

Finally, in October 1996 the Solicitor General, along with the Attorney General, announced the independent review of the civilian oversight of policing. This review



has since been released and has provided the ministry with recommendations on how to achieve a simpler, more efficient and more effective civilian oversight.

The proposed amendments are, I believe, of enormous benefit to the people of Ontario. I believe it will make our policing more effective. I believe it will make it more cost-efficient and will really improve police service delivery in Ontario. That is not going to be an easy task in these times because in all areas we're asking to do more with less, and that is a difficult challenge for all people. But I must say that the cooperation I've seen among all the players at the summit, and through the meetings with the committee at the level of the ministry, has been a tremendous credit to the people involved.

I don't have a lot of time but I want to talk a little bit about the financing issue. It is very clear that this bill will ensure that all municipalities contribute to the cost of policing their community according to their needs. This will mean fairness to all the people of the province. For those members who don't know, approximately 15% of the province's population is policed now by the OPP without any direct cost to municipalities. Meanwhile, the other 85% are paying for police services through their property taxes.

We recognize that the Police Services Act must be amended to treat all taxpayers fairly. Under this proposed legislation all municipalities will be required to pay for their own policing as of January 1998. This will require amendments to the Police Services Act, as well as to the Regional Municipalities Act and the District Municipality of Muskoka Act.

Under these changes the 576 municipalities currently not paying for OPP policing services will now have to pay for the police services their communities use. This will be determined at the local detachments and will relate directly to the actual workload generated in each municipality. To ensure fairness and consistency, the method of determining the actual amounts owed by municipalities for police services, as well as the time and manner in which payments are to be made, will be prescribed in regulations.

The ministry is also amending the Police Services Act to allow for the recovery of investigation and support services provided by the OPP, such as underwater searches, rescue, tactical teams and technical traffic collision investigations. The cost associated with these investigative services will be considered on a case-by-case basis and recovery of those costs will be at the discretion of the Solicitor General.

I must also add that these changes are consistent with the Who Does What panel recommendations that the province should introduce full cost recovery for policing services provided by the OPP to those municipalities currently not paying.

The issue of governance is again one that I believe is very important to the people of the province. This bill means municipalities will now have the options of choosing the delivery of police services in their community with a governance model which we believe will respond to the local needs of the people in those areas. Under the Police Services Act, municipalities are provided with the options to give them more flexibility in

how they will meet their obligations to provide police services.

Under the act, a municipality can have its own police service, amalgamate its police services with one or more other services, contract with the OPP or another police service to provide police services, or adopt a different method of police services with the approval of the Ontario Civilian Commission on Police Services.

In the short time I have here, I also would like to talk very briefly about the police services boards. Under the new legislation, police services boards will remain as the civilian governing authority of police services in Ontario. There was tremendous debate about how that should happen and who should have the ultimate majority control or whether there should be police services.

Police services boards will still be made up of the same number of members, depending upon the community. Again, that will be based on size. For example, a municipal population of less than 25,000 will have three members, populations of over 25,000 will have five, and populations of over 300,000 will have seven board members.

However, the appointment authority for police services boards will change. Under the changes, municipalities will now appoint the majority of the members. In addition to the existing municipal council representatives, a municipality will now appoint a community representative who is not an elected official or an employee of the municipality and the province will retain a minority number of appointments.

Municipalities will have the authority to set police budgets. Therefore, municipalities that pay for police services from their municipal property tax will have the ultimate say in financial matters. I fully understand that this did create some concerns for some of the members, but I believe the new amendments will mean police services boards will be responsible for allocating funds and administering police service budgets in a fair manner.

To help municipalities with this change in structure, the Ministry of the Solicitor General and Correctional Services will develop regulations for police services board members, including a code of conduct, conflict-of-interest policy, training requirements, and length-of-appointment and remuneration guidelines. For those who were maybe concerned that the province was not going to have as much control in policing, those things I talked about — the regulations for code of conduct, the conflict-of-interest policy, training requirements and length-of-appointment as well as remuneration guidelines — will play a key role in ensuring that the province has a say in what happens with members of the police services boards. When you look at the things I just mentioned, this is one of the areas I think all of the members of this House can agree on.

In the meantime, to make it easier to coordinate police services across municipal boundaries, the legislation allows for the creation of joint police services boards. The composition of these joint boards will be the same as those of other police services boards. However, the participating municipalities will have to agree among themselves which members of the respective municipal councils will represent all of them at the joint board, as



well as who the community representatives will be. I firmly believe the municipal councils will do as we hope the province attempted to do through all governments of all political stripes over the past few years and appoint people they feel represent the community and the best interests of the people of the community as they have their deliberations.

In my association as parliamentary assistant as well as my time here in the Legislature, I can say that the vast majority of people in the police services boards have served with honour and with dignity. They have worked hard. I think the level of cooperation has been excellent. I also believe that this will not change, that those same people who are from those communities will be able to continue to participate if they're selected by the people from the municipal councils. I believe the tradition we have of having fine people represent us on the police service board will continue.

Municipalities that receive police services from the OPP other than by contract may have community policing advisory committees. These committees will advise the OPP detachment commander of the community's objectives and priorities for local service.

I believe I was allotted approximately 10 minutes or so, and I think I've gone over that time. Obviously there is never enough time to get into some of the details.

1520

**Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin):** Take another 11 minutes.

**Mr Carr:** As my colleague from the Liberal Party says to take a little bit longer, we'll remember that there were times in this House where we used to have occasion to speak for a couple of hours on bills.

**Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines):** The good old days.

**Mr Carr:** The good old days, as the member for St Catharines is saying.

During that process, it has been my opportunity to get to know the process a little bit better. I believe that while we may not have an opportunity to hear from as many members, I will be sitting through these particular hearings and hopefully we'll get a chance to go across the province. I will also be taking the time to listen to all the members from all three sides as they deal with this issue. I sat through the member for Welland-Thorold's comments the last time we gathered here and thoroughly enjoyed some of the points he made.

I will sum up in saying that I have had the opportunity of being involved intimately with this piece of legislation, and while we still are not done with it, and hopefully we'll have an opportunity to make some amendments that will improve the bill, I believe we have moved a great step forward in helping improve the whole issue of policing in this province.

I will say that it has been an honour and a pleasure to work with the members and the ministry on this and to work with all of the people who have been involved. Again, the people who I think deserve a great deal of the credit are some of the people who put in all of the time and effort, the people who were there from the Ontario Association of Police Services Boards, the people who were from the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police as

well as the Police Associations of Ontario, the Ontario Senior Officers Association and the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, as well as the ministry staff who spent countless hours going through this.

Our job on this particular piece of legislation, though, as they say, is just beginning, and we're going to have an opportunity to hear from some of the members. I look forward to that, and I hope that as we go forward we're going to be able to continue to work to improve policing in Ontario. I know all members sincerely and honestly want to ensure that we maintain what I believe we have right now, which is one of the finest police services anywhere in the world. This whole process I think will be an excellent one.

I hope my comments have been helpful to some of the members in letting them know what is happening, and I hope that as we go forward we will have an opportunity to hear from other members and to work to improve this bill.

In summing up, I have enjoyed the process. I look forward to continuing as we move forward, and to all members, I wish them success as we go through this process.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley):** Questions or comments?

**Mr Bradley:** I want to let the parliamentary assistant know that there's going to be a need for a lot of police resources as this government permits video lottery terminals or electronic slot machines in every bar and every restaurant on every street in every neighbourhood in every community in Ontario.

Today, or yesterday, we had an announcement by the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations that they're going to set up another large number of casinos across the province where there are going to be video lottery terminals: new access, a new escalation in gambling opportunities from a government that in opposition was so opposed to gambling and which is now addicted itself to gambling revenues because they now have their hands in the pockets of the charities, taking the lion's share of the money from each of these casinos. So I can tell the parliamentary assistant they're going to need a lot of police to police these activities.

I don't know where they're going to get the money, because the government seems to be spending so much of its money on advertising, self-serving advertising with the Premier's face on the television screen, and when you phone up the number and ask for something, they send you something from the Progressive Conservative Party, which is a clear abuse of taxpayers' funds. I hope the police departments have some money left over when the advertising campaign in health, education and municipal affairs is over with, fully paid for by the taxpayers of Ontario, the majority of whom disagree with this government, and they still have to pay for these ads.

Lastly, I hope there is some money left for the police after the tax cut is fully in effect, because this government has to borrow \$5 billion a year in order to finance the tax cut. I would suspect the member for Oakville South, in his heart of hearts, because he can be on many occasions a sensible person, probably opposes this advertising campaign and probably opposes this bizarre



tax scheme which is going to be of most benefit to the richest people in our province.

**Mr Floyd Laughren (Nickel Belt):** I must say I enjoyed the remarks from the member for Oakville South. Of all the members in this assembly, I think his demeanour changed the most when he became a government member and a front-bencher, because I can recall in opposition he was a virtual mad dog in this place, second only to Bob Runciman. But since he's taken on these responsibilities of government, he's very measured in his speeches and his actions. I must say it's been a complete transformation. I don't know whether to congratulate him or not. I hope he hasn't lost a lot of the old spunk he used to have.

I must say, getting to Bill 105, that he does make his case on equity in policing. I think he does a good case in making that argument. I can remember in government we struggled with that issue as well, as other governments have. But I must say that what clouds a bill such as this, which may have some good aspects to it, is what's underlying all this downloading on to the municipalities. It takes away from some of the things that are going on that perhaps we would have a more balanced response to, because it's very obvious what's going on, whether it's amalgamation to make larger units to make downloading easier for this government or whether it's the simple act of downloading itself. I spent some time yesterday detailing what's happened in my community, where they're going to have to absorb \$105 million in downloaded costs; that's after the educational component has been removed from the property taxes. So that's clouding some of the issues that would get a much cleaner debate, if I could put it that way, if it wasn't for the regressive downloading that's occurring.

**Mr Gary L. Leadston (Kitchener-Wilmot):** I'd like to speak in reference to Bill 105 regarding the amendments to the Police Services Act. When I was a police officer in the 1960s, we had a lot less crime and we had a lot fewer social problems than we have today. People in Kitchener, and in fact all of the province of Ontario, left their doors unlocked. Parents could be assured that their children were safe on the streets. During that period I enjoyed being a police officer. Later on, when I was chairman and a board member of the Waterloo Police Services Board, I also enjoyed that experience. Today we live in a much different society. There's a great mistrust for other people. People feel uncomfortable walking down a darkened street. Unfortunately, the Police Services Act has not really changed to reflect the changes in society. It is in dire need, great need, of an overhaul.

The Solicitor General has recognized that need and initiated a long-overdue review of police services in December 1995. The government had to find ways of improving front-line police services while eliminating waste and duplication. This was accomplished by consulting both police and municipal stakeholders.

One of the areas that is a great burden to police officers is the oversight of their positions. Most professions have a supervisory level to make sure that he or she is doing a good job. In most cases there is only one level of supervision for an employee in both the private and public sectors. However, police officers —

**The Acting Speaker:** I'm sorry, your time is up. This was a two-minute response. If you're the next up to speak, you'll have that opportunity in a few minutes.

Further questions or comments? The member for Algoma-Manitoulin.

1530

**Mr Michael Brown:** I was very interested in the parliamentary assistant's comments also, and I would like to share with the member for Nickel Belt the more reasoned demeanour we now see in the parliamentary assistant. Having sat very close to him, it's a little easier on our ears but not necessarily as wonderful.

I want to bring to his attention, though, what this bill in my area — in our area police are well respected. We appreciate what they do. Whether they're in the Elliot Lake municipal department, in the Espanola department, whether they serve at Wikwemikong or with the UCCM on first nations, they are well-respected people within our communities and people who do a good job for our communities.

What he doesn't speak to, however, is the downloading on to the rural municipality. I know that the mayor of Little Current, the mayor of Massey, the reeve of the township of the Spanish River, the reeve of Billings, my friend Aus Hunt, are very concerned about having to pay what will be a very large amount on their property tax assessment for policing services. This is a very, very large amount to the people.

What are they going to get in return? What will they get for their money? He says, "Well, we'll have an advisory committee." I tell you, Parliamentary Assistant, those advisory committees already exist. They're already there. But I think there will be a substantial difference: When these taxpayers are paying, they'll want to call the shots, and you're not going to permit that.

**The Acting Speaker:** The member for Oakville South.

**Mr Carr:** I want to thank the member for St Catharines for his comments. I also want to thank the member for Nickel Belt for his comments. I didn't realize that I had been as aggressive in my opposition days, but when I saw the Speaker smiling, I knew she probably agreed. I know she's a very balanced and very thoughtful person, and when I saw her smiling, I thought, well, he may be right, because she seemed to be agreeing with him while still trying to maintain the neutrality of the Chair. We'll have an opportunity to speak with the Speaker later, but she may be right. We all bring our passions as we come to this place and our youthful enthusiasm as we get into this debate, and hopefully we'll have an opportunity to continue that. But I thank the member for Nickel Belt as well as my colleague from Kitchener-Wilmot.

I also want to especially thank the member for Algoma-Manitoulin for the points he makes. I had the opportunity to be in his riding with the member a couple of summers ago, dealing with some of the timber bills. We had an opportunity of seeing his community. In fact we had probably one of the best dinners at a local restaurant there when we were staying over; Chinese food at the Golden Dragon in his riding. Coming from Oakville, I appreciate more what the member is saying and how vast his riding is. It was a great opportunity.

I take what he is saying about the community and the cost of policing seriously. I understand there are many



communities that feel the same way. Approximately 15% of the total population of the province, the land mass, isn't paying for policing, and that is going to be difficult. As I said in my earlier statements and as the member for Nickel Belt said, it's difficult on top of all the other changes that we made, with respect. Hopefully we'll get an opportunity to address some of those and deal with them.

I thank the honourable member for his comments on this bill.

**Mr Bradley:** Madam Speaker, on a point of order: I would just like to give permission to the member for Kitchener-Wilmot, when he makes his speech, to use much of the same material as he did the last time. We all go through this particular process and none of us will tell if there's any repetition. We promise.

**The Acting Speaker:** Member for St Catharines, that's not a point of order. Further debate?

**Mr Sean G. Conway (Renfrew North):** I'd like at the outset to seek the unanimous consent of the House to share the opening response, which I will give together with my colleague the member for Scarborough-Agincourt, who will return from a committee at some point.

**The Acting Speaker:** Is that agreed? Agreed.

**Mr Conway:** I want to just say at the outset that I enjoyed that byplay between the dean of the House, Mr Laughren, and Mr Carr, and I want to simply weigh in in support of the dean because I too have noticed, to quote a phrase, Floyd, "a protest movement becalmed."

I suppose that for a vigorous, red-blooded Conservative like our friend Carr to encounter the Grits and the godless New Democrats in 1990 was enough to inspire his enthusiasm, but I hear now he has come to terms with those realities and it is his new challenge of dealing with the hot breath of one Terry Young which is becoming ever more felt on his neck over the implications of Bill 81. It may be before the end of the season that the godless New Democrats and the spendthrift Grits look rather tame when compared to the very energetic Mr Young, now of Halton Centre, and we are told a man of some considerable interest in Oakville South.

I want to begin my remarks this afternoon by saying that there are certainly aspects of the policy that our friend from Oakville has developed, together with the minister responsible for police, that I think any reasonable person would want to support, and there are aspects of Bill 105 that I certainly would be willing to support. There are some key elements that give me very deep pause and I'm going to deal with those in the coming moments.

Let me say at the outset that the relationship between civilian government and the police and/or the military is one of the most central and one of the most complex in a free and democratic society. Governments of all stripes at all levels, municipal, provincial, state or national, have wrestled with this relationship for a long, long time.

I was interested in the comments of Mr Leadston from Kitchener, whose comments I'm going to be interested to hear in full later on, because he has served in a police force; I have not. As someone who spends a lot of time on the King's highways of Ontario, I understand some of the difficulties that any highway patrol and certainly any police force has.

I also want to observe at the outset that we have a Conservative government that is dedicated to rigorous right-wing conservatism in the late 1990s, so we should not be surprised that Bill 105 contains core values that one would expect from a rigorous right-wing, right-of-centre Conservative Party. One of the key determinants of the political continuum these days is where politicians and political organizations stand in relation to crime and punishment, and therefore with police forces.

I think any fairminded oppositionist has to say in looking at Bill 105 that we see clearly the stamp of Mike Harris and Bob Runciman, people who ran on a commitment to deal with what they felt were the excesses of the Liberal and New Democratic governments before them, and I might add, probably the excesses of the lukewarm red Toryism of Roy McMurtry and Bill Davis.

I want to be fair. I see before me a Bill 105 which clearly betrays the deep-seated commitments and feelings and orientation of modern Conservatism in Ontario. This is not a bill I would have expected from Robarts or from Davis, but we've got it from Harris and friends and this is the kind of bill I would have expected; not the bill I would have offered, but that is as it should be. Let it be stated again: Harris won the election; I lost it.

I come back to the central point. The relationship between civilian government and police forces is an extremely important and very difficult one.

1540

Let me use one very contemporary example. Before I do, I have a lot of sympathy for what I expect our friend Leadston is going to tell us later in the debate about some of the problems that men and women who walk the beat, who drive the highways, face and have faced in these later years, where quite frankly our society has become more multifaceted, more multicultural and more complex than I believe it was when I was growing up in rural Ontario 35 years ago.

All members, I think, will have some currency with the so-called Airbus affair. I don't stand here today as any advocate for Martin Brian Mulroney, QC. I don't want to unduly engage that debate, but I want members of this assembly and anyone watching this debate to for a moment reflect on what was done to a citizen of this country by, it appears, our national police force, with or without the involvement of the national Department of Justice. It appears from the out-of-court settlement that was arrived at some weeks ago that our national police force now admits that it did some things to a citizen of Canada, who in this case just happens to have been a former Prime Minister, that were, to say the very least, not very well supported by the facts or any facts, and for which now the national police force and I understand the national government have some very deep regret. Mr Mulroney, because of his determination, because of his financial resources, was able to take the national police force and the national government to task for that.

But when we talk about civilian oversight of police forces, let's just remember a few things, because I will agree with my friend Leadston that certain things have happened in the intervening years of 1965 to 1995 that will give chiefs of police and men and women of the Kitchener-Waterloo police force or the OPP or the RCMP



some pause and some concern. But I want all members to reflect on why it is that we require a civilian oversight that is real and effective.

One of the people I'd like to call before this committee dealing with Bill 105 is Brian Mulroney to see if today he has a view on that subject, because I'll tell you, he is owed more than I think he will ever be able to — and as I say, I hold no brief for Brian Mulroney. Think of what was done to him.

I see the member for Kitchener-Wilmot here. I was just thinking about some of the characters we've had, and I'm getting a little ahead of myself, but you know, Gary, you'll remember the Sid Brown case. Can you imagine a situation under the provisions of Bill 105, where you've got Sid Brown loose as an unhappy chief of police down in Waterloo region? Wouldn't that be a happy state of affairs under the provisions of Bill 105?

You will think, as you probably should think, "Oh, that's just an isolated case." Maybe. For those of us in the national capital area, we've had the opportunity to watch the Loranger case unfold over the last two or three years. The endlessly enthusiastic and peripatetic member for Nepean, who seems to have a particular interest in matters of crime and punishment, I don't think in my presence has engaged the Loranger case, and I may do him an injustice. He talks about a lot of other issues of law and order, but I haven't heard him say a word about the Loranger case. I'm sure he has; I just haven't heard him. But if you're a citizen of Ontario living in eastern Ontario with Ottawa as your media centre and you've been following the Loranger case, I'm going to tell you, you will have some very legitimate concerns about what happened or didn't happen there.

I've got in my hand the report of Mr Justice Archie Campbell on the Bernardo investigation. I know Archie Campbell. He's a very fine fellow and a hell of a good judge and he was a great deputy minister of justice. Have you read this? Has anybody bothered? Have you read this? It's worth reading. It is really worth reading. It's not the first inquiry or review of the Niagara Regional Police, I say to the member for St Catharines-Brock. I know my friend Bradley would have gas from me saying this, but let him have some gas. How many times, I say, do I have to sit in this place and get another report about the Niagara Regional Police that tells me they are apparently not up to the job? This is a scandalous indictment of that bloody police force, as far as I'm concerned, and it's not the first one.

So we've got Bill 105. What are we going to do? I see the mayor of Montague is smiling, and he might smile because he'll say, "Conway's just off on one of his little tirades." Well, I am a little bit upset, and some of us who've been here for 22 years have been down this road before. I'll tell you, if I were a family member with a direct involvement in the Loranger case, you wouldn't be able to find my pulse, I say to my friend from Lanark.

That is not to say that all police forces all the time are up to those kinds of activities, because I don't believe that to be true. My experience tells me that the overwhelming majority of men and women in the police are good, hardworking people, with a very difficult job, not one I would want. But they're in a very sensitive situ-

ation in which all kinds of conflicts, real and imaginary, are possible. We've got to have a policy framework that properly balances the public interest against the police interest.

I watched one night recently — I think it was an A&E Biography of J. Edgar Hoover. It is absolutely astonishing that in the greatest democracy, apparently, of the civilized world we've got a chief of police who had the book on them all and was quite willing to use it. Whether it was Lyndon Johnson, Jack Kennedy, you name it, he had it and he was quite willing to apply it. I look at Bill 105 and I say to myself, "Well now, what would J. Edgar Hoover say about this?" I think he'd like Bill 105 a lot more than he would have liked Roy McMurtry and his police complaints commission.

I just ask honourable members to give some thought to some of this, this question of the relationship of civilian government to police and military. We are being treated this very season to the Somalia inquiry and I think I can say this because now it appears to be a truly bipartisan mess. You're a citizen of Canada today and you're looking at that. Boy, you must feel good. Doesn't it really? And what do you know? The poor stiff on the front line, he's already in jail, convicted by some kind of a process. But have you noticed, as you move up the accountability ladder, oh boy, none of the big fish have yet fried and are not likely going to fry. Maybe they shouldn't. Maybe that's unfavourable phraseology.

But I think one of the reasons that people are a little fed up out there is the sense that there isn't very much accountability at the top, that if you're the chief of police, you're the minister, you're the deputy, you're never responsible for anything. No matter how egregious the misconduct, no matter how regular the truancy, no matter how serious the transgression, somebody else is responsible. "Not on my watch, sir." I think Mr and Mrs Ontario, Mr and Mrs Canada, have seen through that. And you know, as I watched some of the Somalia inquiry, it just reminds me of a lot of other things, that it's just —

*Interjection.*

**Mr Conway:** You might be right. Listen, I quite accept my friend from Grimsby's view of the world.

*Interjection.*

**Mr Conway:** Oh no, it's your Grimsby connections that I hear most about, I say to the member for Brant-Haldimand. They're the ones that I hear are most richly embroidered. Your later days in Brant-Haldimand are of less interest to me than your Grimsby days. But I say he may very well be right. I think he is right in the sense that —

*Interjection.*

**Mr Conway:** Oh, I say to my friend, he's probably right about June 1995, but my point is we have before us Bill 105 and we're asked to approve his policy.

*Interjections.*

**Mr Conway:** The member from Oakville — Gary, you must be the parliamentary assistant, right? Right. The man in charge of Bill 105 and bootie camps. I say to the member for Nickel Belt, you think he's becalmed. I heard him on the radio the other day talking about bootie camps. I'll tell you, it is as though he and Runciman have gone to some NDP behaviour modification course.



1550

We have Bill 105 and it asks us to set aside a fair bit of the history. Again, it's too bad Roy McMurtry's not here. I'd like to have the former Attorney General, the now Chief Justice, tell us about why it was he felt in the early 1980s that the time had come for a more independent, more antiseptic police complaints process. It did not happen by accident. Some of the very things I think you are going to open the door to are the very things that occasioned the previous Conservative government to create a structure that in Bill 105 you are substantially amending and in fact removing.

At the outset I just want to observe this relationship and ask members to think about some of the people, some of the circumstances. I didn't know I was going to be speaking this afternoon so I've just pulled some of this together rather quickly, but I'm sure that with a little more time I could have come up with quite a longer list of some very interesting cases of chiefs of police. Too bad my colleague from Cornwall's not here. The former big-time police officer is now the mayor. It's like Zanibbi up in Sudbury. Some of these chiefs of police are some of the most colourful and creative characters I've ever met. We're now, under Bill 105, going to empower these people to decide on what's going to proceed. On the basis of my knowledge of human nature, that is a roll of the dice and we shall see what we shall see.

**Mr Garry J. Guzzo (Ottawa-Rideau):** What about the former mayor of Eastview?

**Mr Conway:** Which one?

**Mr Guzzo:** The one who sits beside you.

**Mr Conway:** Ah, the former mayor of Eastview? Yes, I —

**Mr Guzzo:** He's an expert on things like that.

**Mr Conway:** I thought you were going to maybe talk about the former mayor of Hawkesbury. Remember him?

We could have a lot of talk. The former mayor of Windsor — I can think of a lot of —

*Interjections.*

**Mr Conway:** I ask members, just think — you might want to make light of this — about what you're asking approval of here, because in terms of the police complaints situation, the chief of police is now going to play a central role. In a perfect world, with all interests being pure and even, it shouldn't be a problem but if I look to the Loranger case, if I look to the Mulroney case, if I look to a number of other cases, boy, I really have to agree with Alan Borovoy who said of the new complaints procedures contained in Bill 105, "You really have given the police an enhanced role of umpiring that may not be in the public interest."

Let me talk more directly to some of the specifics of the bill and start by observing what many have observed. The parliamentary assistant indicated this in his remarks. There's been a real grievance around Ontario for as long as I've been here that some municipalities, actually the majority of municipalities representing at least the majority of people in Ontario, have long paid for their police. About 15% of Ontario representing about 1.4 million people have, to use the parlance of this debate, gotten a free ride, and that's been a real irritant with which governments of all stripes have had to contend.

It's too bad that the sainted Frank S. Miller, PEng, of sainted memory, former Premier, is not here, because one of the obvious exceptions to the rule was the regional municipality of Muskoka. I don't mean to malign the member from Muskoka. I saw Mr Grimmett out one day here recently sitting rather disconsolately on the stairs reading a bill. I thought to myself, "I bet you that's Bill 105," because poor Grimmett is now going to have to go back to Muskoka and undo what many felt for decades was Frank Miller's great achievement: "We got regional status" — whenever that was, in the early 1970s — "without paying for policing."

Many a time I was in Port Carling and Bracebridge and Minett and places of that kind, saying: "That Frank Miller had clout at Queen's Park. We're a region and we don't pay for policing." Thanks to Runciman and Carr, they're now going to be given the opportunity to pay for policing.

**Mr David Turnbull (York Mills):** It's the right thing to do.

**Mr Conway:** The member from Old Post Road, with constituents like Conrad Black, the illustrious member for York Mills, says, "That's the right thing to do." If you live on Old Post Road I don't doubt that there is a lot of greater Ontario that appears a bit idiosyncratic and irregular.

Mr Grimmett will go home and he will explain to people how he's right and Frank Miller was wrong.

**Mr Guzzo:** Grimmett will declare interest when he goes home.

**Mr Conway:** Listen, I'm not going to take on the judge; I know better.

**Mr Guzzo:** Mr Grimmett's wife is a police officer.

**Mr Conway:** More importantly, her parents are constituents of mine with whom I had breakfast in the county just this past weekend, so I have to be even more careful.

We've got Cumberland — I don't know how up to date I am on these lists; I've got a list here someplace — township in Ottawa. Carleton was another one that we always liked to cite because they had several thousands of people, I say to the judge, and they were apparently getting free policing; places like Wiarton and Tweed were paying. That's all going to end.

In the interests of equity, who could be opposed to this? I think there are some people who have a right to a very real opposition and those are the people my friend Brown from Kagawong spoke of just a few moments ago.

There is no doubt that there have to be changes. I can think of, in my constituency, in my county, so ably represented by my — I share. The able representation is my colleague from Montague. He's got the town of Arnprior which pays over \$1 million to the OPP for policing, and McNab township which is a suburban periphery and in the main gets free OPP policing. In my part of Renfrew county, the taxpayers in Pembroke where I live pay some \$1 million for policing, and Petawawa gets free policing though their population is growing to be nearly as large. Those inequities are obvious matters that have to be dealt with. I suspect those are going to be difficult but manageable.



There are whole sections of Ontario, however, that are going to be a real issue, because, you see, if I'm in McNab township or in Petawawa, if I impose a charge I can at least imagine — or in Cumberland — organizing some kind of a visible police service. Come with me to rural southwest Renfrew, come to where I have a summer residence up in Brudenell and Sebastopol and Raglan and greater Denbigh; now I say —

**Mr Guzzo:** They don't need police up there.

*Interjection.*

**Mr Conway:** That's not the panhandle, I say to my friend.

How are we going to do this? How are we going to organize some kind of a police service in the very purely rural parts of southern and northern Ontario?

**Mr Peter L. Preston (Brant-Haldimand):** Start with the chief and work down.

**Mr Conway:** My friend from Grimsby, now of Brant-Haldimand, says, "Start with the chief and work down." That's exactly what the rural burghers will think you're up to: "You'll find a chief and you'll start and we'll never see" — the chief will be busy. The chief will be over in Plum Hollow at a meeting with the local MLA. He won't have any time, she won't have any time to go and talk to real people out on the fourth concession. Jordan's cows are loose and somebody's called and said, "The highway is blocked because Jordan's cows are loose." Well, no, no, no. The chief, who's got an empire of some several hundred square whatever, is down at Plum Hollow having a meeting, and the parliamentary secretary from Old Post Road in Toronto has come to give the inherited wisdom of Her Majesty's government, and these important people are all at a meeting. We've got no time and no resources to get somebody out on the fourth concession to deal with the problem.

1600

You see, we're not talking about Brantford, we're not talking about Grimsby, we're not talking about Pembroke. We're talking about very rural areas. These people are going to get a bill. Every year they're going to get a bill. The line on the tax bill is going to say something like — let me be generous, charitable. It might be as little as \$125; it might be something like \$300. Who knows? Yet to be decided.

The parliamentary assistant looks quizzical, and well he might. It is undecided. But I'm in Brudenell township, Renfrew county, a long way from any urban centre, and I'm getting this bill. And for what am I getting this bill? Police services that aren't and can't be organized in any real way to provide service in those rural communities. They're just rural townships.

People know that. They know that if you're in a hamlet or a village, they can imagine a service being organized — not, obviously, as sophisticated as it might be in Hamilton or in Ottawa. But if you're in St George or if you're in all kinds of smaller places, you can at least run the car around the streets for a few times a day and people know you've been there. What do you do in Brudenell township? You could be running all week with no guarantee that any more than 10% of the constituents would see you, and it wouldn't necessarily be a good use of your resources.

The other aspect of this in these rural communities — and I can use some of my own. I've got townships where, by and large, most of the population lives along the Highway 17 corridor. My friend Carr represents the OPP. We've made a deal. We've contracted with Carr and the OPP to provide police service. But you see, knowing what I know about government and police bureaucracies of any kind — I'm assuming, by the way, in this policy that Her Majesty's provincial government is still going to accept some responsibility for what my American friends would call the highway patrol. I suspect that will be their public position.

But I'm going to tell you, in a lot of these rural areas along King's highways it will be very interesting dynamic and dialectic as to what's highway patrol and what's local policing. But I have a feeling that since Her Majesty's provincial government will essentially be player and umpire in this game, those local ratepayers are going to have to be very vigilant and very careful and very resourceful to keep Carr and the OPP from pushing much of the highway patrol costs on to the local property taxpayers in those areas. Now, it may not be a justified concern, but I'm telling you, I would really like to see the formula that is going to be developed by these various organizations, local and central, to prevent that from being the case.

I want to say very strongly, on behalf of rural constituents in the very rural parts of particularly southwest Renfrew, south-central Renfrew; North Hastings, ably represented by our friend from Rodden, and North Addington, much of Haliburton, it is going to be extremely difficult to provide any kind of meaningful police service, yet we are apparently going to tithe people on their property for that service. I'm going to be very interested to see what the reaction is going to be.

Since my friend from Hastings has returned, let me just run another one of my favourite local saws in this revolutionary new world. There is a part of southeastern Ontario, south of Algonquin Park, east of Lakefield, west of the village of Eganville and north of Highway 7. In geography class we used to call it the Frontenac axis, a great swath of shield, all of it divided into townships, most of it populated to one degree or another for over 100 years. What makes it interesting is that the largest property owner, by a long shot, is Her Majesty the Queen in right of the Ontario government.

Since it is the new policy that property taxes should to the greatest extent possible shoulder the cost of hard services: roads, particularly their maintenance, police, fire and such like — and quite frankly that is an argument that is credible and often persuasive; it is to me. That's part of the argument that's led us to take the big soft service, education, off the property tax. But I don't think there are very many people who do challenge the notion that property taxes should pay for those hard services: fire, police, road, water, sewer, if they're applicable.

Accepting that as a policy, my question to the junior minister of police and all his friends on the treasury bench is this: What about making Her Majesty pay, as the ratepayer to that great swath of southeastern Ontario, for her share of the rates based on the property she owns? She will no longer, through her loyal ministers here at



Queen's Park, be paying a grant in lieu — not a grant in lieu but an unconditional grant — to these municipalities. As long as we were paying an unconditional grant or some kind of municipal support grant to our friend the warden of Hastings and the reeve of Rodden on behalf of Her Majesty, we had at least a leg on which to stand. Now it's all gone. So back to police charges.

I want to know, I say to the junior minister of police, are you going to submit to Her Majesty a bill as the biggest property owner through my part of southeastern Ontario? I don't expect an answer now. There aren't very many people in government today who even know what we're talking about, because this is a very unusual land tenure for southern Ontario. The squire of Montague thinks I'm just caviling like some nitpicking oppositionist. I think it's a real issue. I think it's a very real issue, and not just on police but on fire and a variety of other things. If you want this policy, then the Ontario government is the biggest game in town.

Let me just tell you, in my county, in Renfrew county, 50% of the land base is crown land. I've got several townships with populations scattered all through them that are over 100 years old; 140 years in some cases. The land base in those townships is up to 70% crown land. If you're in Brant-Haldimand or in the Niagara Peninsula or, God forbid, in south Halton, you can't conceive of such a scheme. It's hard to conceive of it in south Lanark, but that's the reality for three or four of us. So what's the policy going to be? Where does that bill go?

If I live in Denbigh, represented by the member for Frontenac-Addington — and perhaps outer space because I don't see him around here any more; I'm sure he's busy working for his constituents — these people are going to want to know. And somebody better have an answer to that question, because I think the people living in the most rural parts of Ontario are going to be potentially the most disadvantaged by this policy.

I understand the theoretical construct for the policy, the equity argument, but I repeat, I own property and live in a community of 15,000. I pay, through my property taxes, for a police service that I see all the time in my community. When I go out into the hinterland of my county where I have a summer recreational property, my expectation around policing is fundamentally different, and I will be, like I think most of my constituents in rural Ontario, very annoyed to see a line item on my tax bill of \$150 to \$275, whatever, for a service that I know is not going to be there.

1610

I see eyebrows raised, and most of the people out there understand why it can't be there. They hope that the OPP detachment at Killaloe or at Bancroft is going to be sufficiently well staffed to meet the provincial policing responsibilities, but to start imposing a land tax on property owners in those areas for policing I think is a very serious matter, and I want to join with my colleague the member for Algoma-Manitoulin in underlining that concern.

I've got to leave some time for the member for Scarborough-Agincourt, so I will get on to some other things here and then leave the recently returned member from Scarborough to a few words of his own. One of the

aspects of this bill I found very interesting. I see that when we come to police commissions — and boy, this will make a lot of people at the municipal level happy, because now those top-down, Queen's-Park-imposed police boards will be no more. There will at least be a majority of local folks on the police commission, and that will certainly, I agree with my friend from Lanark who nods approvingly, lower the blood pressure of a lot of municipal politicians.

I was just struck by a couple of things in the bill. Looking at people who cannot serve on local police commissions, you can't be on the police services board if you're a police officer or a defence lawyer. That's interesting, and quite frankly very understandable. Has anybody over there noticed that it's rather different criteria than the government used on the education bill? You can't be on a school board, according to bill whatever it is, if you're a teacher or the spouse of a teacher.

I just ask, why would we not apply, why would Her Majesty's current provincial government not apply the self-same standard to Bill 105? I think I know why. Because this is a government that wants to say to the police, as Bill Clinton would say it: "I feel your pain. I'm with you." The teachers, oh, now that's a different kettle of fish, but anybody with a brain would read this and notice a double standard, and it certainly begs the question, why would police spouses be eligible for public service in a way that teachers' spouses are not? I'm sure that somebody will have an answer to that question, though, as I say, I think it's a matter of politics and one that I would understand, though not share, from this government.

I wanted to say something about the role of the provincial government in setting the rules. The mayor of Wallaceburg is someone I have known for some time. Wallaceburg is in Kent county. It's a town of some 11,000 people. It seems like a very typical Ontario community. The mayor and council at Wallaceburg have had an incredible experience with the Ontario Police Commission over the last four or five years, an unbelievable experience if the mayor of Wallaceburg and his colleagues are to be believed. The nub of that issue is that the provincial commission is hell-bent for leather that they are going to tell the local community in chapter and verse what they're going to do and not do about some pretty detailed personnel policy, incurring all kinds of expenses, and other management issues. I look at Bill 105 and I see a very limited retreat by the Ontario government from that tendency. It is going to be, I think, a very real issue for a lot of municipalities.

I have before me the brief of the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, AMO, in response to this police bill. Standards, they say, will not be specified in the legislation, and they're right. All of it is to be set out in regulation: all kinds of opportunities for the government to exercise, in its role as player and referee, all kinds of advantage to the centre, to the disadvantage and to the additional cost of the community or the region.

For those of you who are not familiar with the Wallaceburg example, it is your worst nightmare. It didn't occur on your watch and you don't need to worry. I don't know whether it's a partisan issue with the previous government, I say to the current Speaker, but the mindset of yet



another commission that is going to tell in this case a community of 11,000 what they can and cannot do and the treatment afforded and accorded the mayor and the community were extraordinary.

So as I look at Bill 105, I see all kinds of opportunities for the agents of our friend from Oakville and the member from Brockville, the Solicitor General — the provincial government — to say on the one hand we're going to devolve the management and certainly all of the costs or most of the costs, but we are going to set standards and we are going to determine key ingredients of that cost structure.

It's going to be very interesting too, for example — I guess the assumption is going to be, and it would be quite reasonable, that for all or many of those communities that now don't have policing, particularly the smaller ones, they are simply going to contract with the OPP. You can see already the problem. You are a community, you're a potential client, but the trouble is that your service provider is also your regulator. Now, that's a happy state of affairs.

We've got some of that with Hydro. As Hydro starts to get more into the delivery of services, you get people out in the country saying: "How does this work again? They're now in my backyard competing with me as the local utility or as a private entrepreneur, but gee whiz, they just happen to be my supplier and my regulator." That's a happy state of affairs.

You don't have to be Einstein to see the potential conflicts. So I say to the junior minister —

**Mr W. Leo Jordan (Lanark-Renfrew):** It's not potential; it's there.

**Mr Conway:** Absolutely. The potential, whether it's acted upon is an entirely different matter, but I suspect there are going to be a lot of people sitting around municipal councils saying, "Hmm, now what do I do here?"

**Mr Guzzo:** I thought you were making an argument to privatize.

**Mr Conway:** No, because I agree with the minister. The minister has said that there can be only three choices: You start your own municipal force, you contract with the OPP or you contract with an existing municipal force. That is, to me, a very sensible policy, and I support him in it entirely.

But I try to imagine myself again in a situation of shopping around. Think about the personnel issues that are at play here. Just think about it. I'm sitting here thinking, "Well, shall I buy the service from the Renfrew town police or shall I get it from the OPP?" One of these service providers is more than a service provider; they are regulator, they are umpire, and boy, they're operating in a very delicate, sensitive business. It's kind of like water polo: Most of the real sport goes on underneath the water line, away from the cameras.

I just think it affords a lot of opportunity for creative people. With my friend the judge from Rideau here, I want to make an observation, because another part of this bill turns upon the role of the special investigations unit. I hope my friend Leadston gets into some of the cases because he knows them better than I. I think there have been examples in recent time which make the case that

some of the oversight and some of the investigation has been irksome and perhaps even political. That's the sense I get from some people in certain of the police community.

1620

On the other hand, I'm very familiar with examples that would take your breath away on the other side, where the behaviour of the police force — again, I don't want to use extreme examples, but people saw the famous Watergate scandal. Who would have believed it? Who would believe that people would have done those things and done them quite actively? Lawbreaking.

Many of you are old enough to remember Mr Justice McDonald's inquiry into the activities of the RCMP in the 1970s. Remember that? Remember what Mr Justice McDonald found out about some of the practices? The member for Nepean was otherwise engaged, and we can understand why, but for those of us who see ourselves as typical Canadians who support the police, it's pretty bloody hard to fathom that people would do that, for whatever good cause, for whatever good end — but the barn burning and the lawbreaking to support some counterespionage, whatever. I didn't have time to go back into that, but the McDonald royal commission into the activities of the RCMP in the 1970s made for some very interesting reading.

I want to repeat, Mr Justice Campbell's 400-plus page report into the behaviour of the Metro police force and the Niagara Regional Police Force on the Bernardo matter — to read this is to weep and to rage. I can't imagine what it must be like to read this and have some direct personal involvement, and that's not because I expect that there's going to be perfection. There's a great story by Kirk Makin in this latest edition of *Toronto Life* about fabulous police work by the Metro police on the High Park rapist, so there's an example on the other side of where there is exceptional policing. But I'm telling you, you ought to read this, and then you imagine that you're a parent.

This is not the first inquiry into the Niagara Regional Police Force. For those of us who want to be as supportive as possible of the police forces —

**Mr Tom Froese (St Catharines-Brock):** It's all cleaned up now. Come on; quit ranting.

**Mr Conway:** I hope you're right. I hope and I pray you're right, because 10 years ago we were told the same thing. I'll just end the discourse there and I will bank on your assessment because you live there and I don't.

But I want to come back to my friend the judge because we have an issue in here about —

*Interjection.*

**Mr Conway:** You think I'm colourful. You ought to have heard the judge when he was on the bench.

About the special investigations unit: This gives me an opportunity just to raise a caution. I notice that Her Majesty's new Ontario government appointed some months ago André Marin as the new director of the SIU, a 31-year-old assistant crown attorney whose father, I must say, was famous. I don't know the son, I do know the father.

A 31-year-old assistant crown attorney is now the head of the special investigations unit. I am the last person to declaim youth and to discount youth, but I just want to



make an observation that this is a very sensitive and delicate job. A 31-year-old assistant crown attorney. I don't care how able one is at 31; this is a job where, quite frankly, I would have wanted a greater life experience than the relative youth of —

**Mr John R. Baird (Nepean):** How old were you when you were Minister of Education?

**Mr Conway:** I was 34. But I tell you, I would not hire me and I would not have appointed me at 31 to be director of the SIU. I don't mean that as critically as it's got to sound, because surely that's a job of enormous sensitivity and judgement, and those are qualities that I believe in these matters are developed —

**Mr Froese:** I wouldn't hire Baird either; he's only 25.

**Mr Conway:** I say this seriously, and I'm sure the advisers to whomsoever made the appointment had good reason, but many, or some, and some in the public domain, have raised very legitimate concerns about that appointment. Mr Marin may be very able. I don't doubt he was a very good crown attorney. At 31 he would have had lots of years to build the dossier. But I really do think that if we want to have a credible SIU and one that's seen to be credible, certainly you have raised some very real doubts in my mind with that appointment to that position.

As I turn to my colleague from Agincourt to finish this, I want to summarize that my principal objections to this bill are around the impacts on the very rural parts of my county, Renfrew, and the rest of rural and northern Ontario because we are going to be imposing a real and significant cost on those people for a police service that cannot be reasonably delivered to them.

Secondly, I think the bill and the policy are seriously deficient around the oversight provisions, that while there have been some problems with some of the recent structures, you have returned, in my view, to pre-1980, to a situation where you're putting chiefs of police in positions of near impossibility. I think you're going to lose considerable support in the community when they understand what's been done here. You have, I think, to a real extent thrown the baby out with the bathwater.

I end my observation with the point at which I began: The relationship between civilian government and police is enormously important, very complex, and surely turns in a free and democratic society on the principle that at the end of the day there is going to be clear responsibility, there's going to be a clear policy that turns on the concept that the civilian government is going to be, at the end of the day, responsible and seen to be responsible.

Now to my friend from Agincourt.

**Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt):** I'm pleased to join the debate on Bill 105. I think by now the public probably appreciates that we're dealing with a package of bills, each of them in and of itself quite significant. Taken as a total package, they are clearly going to redefine Ontario. There's no question about that, and the government would be the first to acknowledge that.

I think the first thing that the public and all of us need to be aware of is that the government has embarked on a very serious offloading of costs on to municipalities. We will have a debate in the Legislature over the next few weeks around the significance and the size of that off-loading.

Today, the Association of Municipalities of Ontario was before our standing committee on finance and economic affairs saying that even though the government announced its intent several weeks ago, they, the major partner with the government, have been unable to get clarification on the total size of the offload. But this is part of it, and make no mistake about it. For municipalities that are going to be required now to pick up the cost of policing, if it were simply a wash, I think they would be saying: "Listen, I understand it completely. You're taking education off our property tax and we're picking up the police costs. We can understand that." But it looks very much like what the government is doing is adding about \$1 billion of extra costs to the property taxpayers of Ontario.

1630

I have been travelling around the province talking to municipal leaders. Without exception they have been saying that as they look at the numbers, including the funds the government said it was going to provide, we're looking across the province at the possibility of a 10% increase in property tax. I challenge the government to produce the numbers. Our caucus, working with municipalities, has gone through all of the costs and we've said the government is eliminating from the property tax education, children's aid and women's shelters, and then it is adding this list to the property tax. At the top of it is community policing.

The government has already acknowledged — these are government-acknowledged numbers — they are adding \$6.3 billion, taking \$5.4 billion off. But they have chosen to ignore what the municipalities tell us are very substantial costs for provincial highways, sewer and water, social housing, municipal transit and GO, and ambulance service costs. As the public listens to this debate about municipalities that currently don't pay for policing picking up the policing costs, I think many people in Ontario would say that sounds reasonable. If 85% of Ontario is paying off their property tax for policing, why shouldn't those other communities pay off property tax? If it were that simple, I think the government would have no difficulty in selling the bill. But this is part of a package that is going to add over \$1 billion of costs to property taxes in Ontario, and that, by the way, is after taking into account what they call the community reinvestment fund.

As this unfolds and for those of us who have municipalities that right now have policing provided by the province, I think you should expect that when everything clears, this exercise is first and foremost part of a grand plan to offload substantial extra costs from the province. We all know why. The government has said it has to cut another \$4 billion of costs. The Minister of Finance a couple of weeks ago said revenues are a little bit better than we thought and then acknowledged it wasn't because revenues this year are better than they thought; it's because they were better a year ago and they've now taken that into account.

So that's the first thing. When municipalities find that they have to pick up social assistance, long-term care — and who would ever have thought that long-term care, care for our seniors, was going to be moved from the



province, where all of us were paying for long-term care, and put on to property tax? Child care: There are a half a million children in this province, 500,000 children, who rely every day for their food, their clothing, their shelter on social assistance. That's all going on to property tax now, as is all of the social housing, 100% of the social housing going on property taxes. The seniors in my area can't believe it. They can't believe the government is planning at this stage in their lives to shift their long-term future, their future in terms of adequate care, on to property taxes. So I think we have to view this bill within that context of the government looking to find another \$1 billion of its cuts through this move.

Those are our numbers. We're in the opposition, so the government is certainly free to produce its own numbers. You may recall that here in the Legislature we asked the government to do that, to issue its estimate of the costs, and we were voted down on that. Actually, the government back bench voted against it, which surprised us.

AMO, the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, has been begging the government to come forward with their cost estimates. I think it's fair to say, without any question, that we are looking at — and this is part of the package — a dramatic offload of costs on to municipalities.

What AMO said in their brief — actually, within the last hour or so — was that never did they expect in their wildest imagination that the government would offload these income redistribution programs, these essential programs for people in need, off of provincial responsibility and on to property tax. This is part of an enormous dumping of costs on to municipalities.

I can tell you that in Metropolitan Toronto, in the debate around the amalgamated city, it's having an enormous impact. People see this as part of a package and see this offloading of costs on to property tax as part of a package and see through this as a way, yes, to allow the government to cut provincial income tax, but what it's going to cost is that people will have their property taxes escalate dramatically.

**Mr Michael Brown:** New Jersey.

**Mr Phillips:** My colleague says New Jersey. As we travel around the province — I'm not sure if the members have talked to their mayors, have talked to their councils about what has happened with this offload. The term that many of the regional chairs and mayors have used for it is "Americanization." That is their word. They have a terrific fear —

**Mr Froese:** That is Bradley's word.

**Mr Phillips:** You may not have confidence in the regional chair of Hamilton-Wentworth, I say to one of the members heckling across the way, but I do. He's a very respected leader in the municipalities, someone hand-picked by the Premier to sit on the Who Does What committee. The public should be aware, and I expect by now they are, that the government said these bills we are debating came out of the Who Does What committee's work. Mr Crombie and the rest of his committee said unanimously that this is wrong, that you are doing the wrong thing. Crombie and his 12 members are right. They said they are totally opposed to what you're doing and they unanimously reject what you're doing.

The members may choose to heckle, but I have a lot of confidence, as I said earlier, in the regional chair of Hamilton-Wentworth, who said: "This is a serious, serious mistake you're making. You need to back up here." This is part of the serious mistake, not looking at a way to fund policing differently but putting it in a package that, without question, will drive property taxes up. If you ignore the opposition, that's your right, but the board of trade says you're wrong, the United Way says you're wrong and David Crombie and the Who Does What committee, which you picked — no one else picked them; Mike Harris went out and handpicked them — are telling you: "Don't do this. You are making a huge mistake. Stop it."

I gather the back bench, for whatever reason, is going to stand up and simply vote with the government. I actually couldn't believe it, a couple of weeks ago when we said to the Legislature, "Let's see the studies. Show us the information the cabinet used to make its decision" — the cabinet has information on which they made their decision. They have studied this. They know what the community-by-community impact is. That should have been released. The municipalities, the councillors, but most important, the public have a right to know.

Here we are debating these bills. You want them all through in a big rush. You've imposed time limits on the debate on many of these bills. They have to be passed. But only the cabinet knows what the impact is.

**1640**

I guarantee you this: You are going to find in many municipalities this will drive property taxes up dramatically. Surely we are owed that information. Surely we are owed the analysis on which the cabinet made its decision that it is a good idea and that the property taxpayers will not be burdened to put child care on to the property taxpayers; it's a good idea to put social assistance on to the property taxpayers; it's a good idea to put well over \$1 billion of new, long-term care for seniors on to the property taxpayers; it's a good idea to put ambulance services on to property taxpayers; it's a good idea to put public health — surely when we talk in the Legislature about a comprehensive plan to look at health care, we look at trying to get an integrated approach to health care. The Ontario Hospital Association was at our committee this morning advocating, urging us to look at dealing with this as a package. At the very time they're urging that, part of this package is to take public health off provincial responsibility and put it squarely on the property taxpayers.

The reason I go through this is to indicate to the public: Don't look at this bill in isolation. Look at it in its total package and understand that what you are being asked to do, what we're being asked to do, is to approve it as part of a package that is going to transfer dramatic costs on to the property taxpayer.

Why? The government is determined to implement its tax cut. There is no doubt of that. The government is going to implement a 30% cut in personal income tax that clearly benefits the most well-off in this province. People who are making more than a quarter of a million dollars a year are going to get a \$500-million tax break. It is incredible. The hospitals right now, April 1, have got



to cut \$500 million, and we heard today about the problems in the Peterborough hospital, we heard earlier about problems in other hospitals. Some \$500 million of those health care cuts are going to fund a tax break for people making more than a quarter of a million dollars a year. We understand all of that. The strange thing —

**Interjection:** What's happened to the revenue?

**Mr Phillips:** One of the cabinet ministers said, "What's happened to the revenue?" What's happened to the revenue is that personal income tax revenue is down \$600 million this year over last year.

Part of the concern about the bill is that it is part of a package to download. If this plan the government has to cut and slash expenditures to fund the tax cut was working, one could feel more supportive of their plan. But I was surprised to get in my mail — not surprised, but I got in my mail the latest job report from the government.

**Mr Bradley:** A disaster.

**Mr Phillips:** It is a disaster. "Ontario loses 7,000 jobs in January." Do you realize that in the last five months in Ontario we have lost 37,000 jobs? It is unbelievable; 37,000 fewer jobs in Ontario in the last five months.

**Mr Baird:** That is not what Paul Martin said.

**The Acting Speaker:** Order please, member for Nepean.

**Mr Phillips:** I find it so distressing that the government can simply say: "Thirty-seven thousand jobs? We're doing fine." Ontario has lost 37,000 jobs; the rest of Canada has gained 72,000 jobs in the last five months. So there it is. These aren't my numbers. Get it out. The Minister of Finance — it's dated February 14 but just arrived on February 18, and you can see: "37,000 fewer jobs." Right on the front page it shows it. September, minus 39,000; October, gained 18,000; November, 3,000; December, minus 12,000; January, minus 7,000; 37,000 fewer jobs. It is the worst job performance since 1993. What is happening? The rest of Canada is up 72,000 jobs. This great job-creating engine, the tax cut, is going to just throw off thousands and thousands of jobs. We are having the worst job performance we've had since 1993. That's not me; that's the Minister of Finance.

Perhaps the most disturbing number on the page is that in January 1997 — that is this document — the Ontario youth unemployment rate was 18.6%, up 2.3 percentage points from January 1996. Over a year: 16.3% a year ago, 18.6% this year. I don't know what Ernie Eves says —

**Mr Froese:** On a point of order, Madam Speaker: The member's talking about everything except Bill 105, which we're here to debate. I thought that's what he was supposed to be talking about.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you. Member for Scarborough-Agincourt, would you please come back to the debate on Bill 105.

**Mr Phillips:** I appreciate that, Madam Speaker. Bill 105, as the government is fond of saying, is part of the package. We're dealing with the Who Does What package. The public should be aware that sitting on people's desks are the Who Does What books, and they've got Who Does What pep rallies and they produced their posters and all that. It's all part of the package. They are all woven together. There's no question of that.

**Mr Bradley:** And the TV ads.

**Mr Phillips:** The TV ads are all part of the same package, as my colleague points out.

The government itself is the one that sets the agenda here, to say: "Listen. We're going to deal with this as a package. We have to deal with all of these bills as a package." This is the government's own table of the impact, community police financing. It's all part of the package, and what's it designed to do? According to the government, this is part of the whole job-creating package. I'm saying to the government members, you may not like to hear it, but these are your numbers and these are ones you produced. This is dated February 14 — as I say, it got to my office February 18 — 37,000 fewer jobs in Ontario. It is a disaster. Do you remember you all ran on a platform of 145,000 jobs a year? Remember that? You have not come even in the same ballpark as that.

**Interjection.**

**Mr Phillips:** Actually, I looked at the numbers. By now you should have 228,000 jobs; there are 97,000 jobs. I call them the missing jobs: You're 131,000 jobs behind target right now.

I know what got a lot of votes in my area was Mike Harris saying: "This plan will create 145,000 jobs a year. You people on social assistance, don't worry, because there are going to be jobs for you." Now we see 528,000 people out of work in 1996. How many were there the year before? There were 501,000; 27,000 more people out of work in 1996 than 1995. It is a failure. You are failing the unemployed in Ontario and there's no question of that. These are your numbers: 37,000 fewer jobs — unbelievable. The most tragic one is the youth unemployment at 18.6%, a tragedy and a failure of the government on its major promise, which was jobs.

I tell you that 145,000 jobs was the thing that my opposition used daily with me: "Our plan will create — in fact we've got the stamp of approval from Mark Mullins right on this thing. It's going to be 145,000 jobs." You have not even got halfway to that target in terms of your annual numbers.

**Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex South):** Now Mullins is having reservations.

**Mr Phillips:** My colleague says, "Now Mullins is having reservations," and I gather he is.

We say to the government that as you want us to pass this bill, and as each of us is going to have to answer to communities that, come January 1, 1998, are going to get a bill and they're going to get a tax bill for policing, surely the government, the cabinet, owe the Legislature the same information they had when they made that decision.

I don't know how any of us can go back to our constituents. They say: "I see you're voting on a bill there. What's it going to mean?" "Well, we don't know. The government won't tell us." "I see you're voting on a bill that will be part of a package that's transferring the most massive" — no one can deny it; it is the most massive — "shift in responsibility in the history of the province, and yet you don't have, we don't have, a single study that shows what it's going to mean to each of our municipalities across Ontario."

As I say, AMO, which was before our committee as recently as an hour and a half or so ago, was saying it desperately needs that information to make a decision.



1650

Also, I think the public should be aware it's going to be accompanied by Bill 106, which is property tax reform. You say, "Why mention property tax reform?" It's all part of the package. The government said the day it announced property tax reform: "We are eliminating something called the business occupancy tax. We're getting rid of it. It is \$1.6 billion" Many in the province thought, "My, the provincial government is being good to municipalities; they've decided to eliminate the business occupancy tax" — without being perhaps as clear to the public that that is property tax money that goes to municipalities right now. It is 11% of the tax revenue for municipalities. It's \$1.6 billion.

That's gone. The municipalities can no longer charge that. It's gone. They have to make it up. How are they going to make up? The government says, "You make it up whatever way you want," but municipalities have really only one source of revenue. That's the property tax. So the government has gotten rid of \$1.6 billion of their revenue —

**Mr Crozier:** Which they didn't supply even in the first place.

**Mr Phillips:** Which, as my colleague said, the province didn't supply. It was property taxes paid by businesses directly to municipalities. It's gone. It's got to be made up at the same time as the province has added another \$1 billion of costs.

The reason I raise these is that if we choose to deal with any of these bills in isolation without recognizing the total impact, the public is going to say to us in six months or a year: "Were you asleep at the switch? Why did you not give us an opportunity to look at this thing in total?"

Do any of you not believe that with the business occupancy tax the municipalities are going to have to load it back on to the remaining property taxpayers? It's the only way they can find the revenue. You couple that with the addition of dramatic extra cost and you can see the problem we will run into. As the province attempts to reform property tax, you've added these two huge burdens. You've put another \$1 billion of cost on them, and then you've taken the \$1.6 billion of occupancy tax off. You've told them that over time they have to decrease taxes on businesses. I understand that, but recognize that it is the residential property taxpayer in this province who will increasingly recognize that they are paying for the cut in personal income tax with increased property taxes.

I want to talk about a couple of other aspects of the bill as well and to talk a little bit about the civilian oversight or complaints process. One of the most difficult issues for a community to face is where there is tension between a segment of the community and the police force.

In this proposal, as I read it, the police chief is going to be put in a very difficult position in the future. The police chief, by the way, has without question one of the most difficult jobs in our society: making sure that the men and women of the police force have confidence in the police chief and making sure that the men and women of the police organizations enforce the law but enforce it

fairly and evenly. The police chief needs to have the confidence of the police organization. The police chief also has to have the confidence of the community, and it is one of the most difficult jobs imaginable. I can almost assure us that there will be in the future conflict where part of our community feels it has a legitimate grievance against the police force and where the police force may very well feel it handled it fairly and equitably. The chief, under this process, I don't think has any alternative but to try and be the one in the centre to make the decision.

I can understand the intent of the bill, which is to eliminate frivolous complaints, to not make our police officers subject to frivolous and unfounded accusations, not make them feel so apprehensive of taking almost any step that they take no steps, but at the same time the community needs to feel it has a fair access to some form of complaint resolution. My reading of the bill, as I say, is that if you have a complaint, you have only one choice of where you go with that, and that's to the police chief. The police chief then deals with it. If you don't like the dealing, you can then appeal it.

I have a suspicion that this process will initially probably meet with the police chiefs' support. It's going to put them in an untenable position almost and I wonder if we have examined enough alternatives here. One of the problems in this process is, we may remember, that the individual who had responsibility for studying this was given, as I recall it, a very short time frame for some reason. Many of the community leaders felt that they were given virtually no time to prepare their presentations, so they declined to participate rather than participate in what they regarded as a sham. They said, "This is extremely important to us and you want us to deal with it" — as a matter of fact, the initial phone call I got was that they were told on a Friday they had their presentation on a Monday or Tuesday. That was extended a couple of weeks.

In any event, this is a process where there's been little community involvement, where the community organizations that are most knowledgeable about this have not participated in it. Whenever you do that I think we are setting ourselves and our police organizations up for perhaps something that will be administratively more simple but which creates the potential for a future explosive situation.

1700

As I say, in all the things I've observed over the years in terms of difficult, tension-filled, divisive issues, it's when there is a major conflict between some community and our police organizations that, believe me, sides dig in very quickly and very deeply and you get, rather than a resolution that attempts to find the truth of the matter, sides dividing up very quickly.

I'm saying that on that particular issue the government may have made a mistake in not giving the community sufficient time to participate in it. On the police boards, I know the municipal leadership is quite pleased with the fact that they now will have a majority on the police services. In that particular case, what one has to watch for is our police organizations. They now will be subject to all of the same budget constraints as everybody else.



People may say, "That's just fine and good," but I think we should recognize that for many in the community the police have a special role in their minds and it will be interesting to see how this works out over time.

The big issue is that this bill is part of a total package, and it's a total package designed to help the government achieve its agenda, which is to cut, as they have said from day one — they've never deviated from this — \$8 billion of spending. Roughly 25% of all the spending has to be cut, and it will be cut from everywhere except health care: everywhere else 25%. So it comes as no surprise to us that when you look at the impact on our municipalities, the cut to them, they're going to have to take on roughly another \$1 billion of costs. The government hasn't made the cuts itself. They have turned it over to the municipalities and said, "You make the cuts."

Where this all will lead is, without doubt, to two things: One, that many of our most sensitive services — as I say, I can't think of many things more sensitive in my mind than long-term care for our seniors and programs for our young people: children who need financial assistance for food and clothing and shelter, parents who need financial assistance for child care, families who need support for housing — suddenly all of those things that historically, from the work of Frost, Robarts, Davis and others, who have built a province that had that social infrastructure, were handled and managed and funded by the province now are on to the municipal taxpayers.

You can guarantee that as we head into another downturn — and there will be a downturn. Everybody in this chamber would accept there will be a downturn at some stage. You can imagine the tension in those council chambers as seniors, people with disabilities, children, are there fighting for services, and the property taxpayer, who at the same time will be feeling the same economic pressures, is saying, "I just don't think I can afford more money on my property taxes."

We look forward to further debate on the bill. We look forward to this whole package. We look forward to the government at some stage finally releasing for all of Ontario the information the cabinet is holding in secrecy so we can see the impact of all of this, because in our opinion the impact is quite clear: The government will proceed with its 30% tax cut; it will benefit the best-off; the ones who are the most privileged in the province will simply become more privileged; and those who are most vulnerable and most susceptible will find they are now in a battle with property taxpayers for their very survival.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson):** Comments and questions?

*Interjections.*

**Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South):** If only they knew what the heckles are back home sometimes, they would understand why we're laughing.

I want to comment on the combined dissertation or speech on the part of the member for Renfrew North and the member for Scarborough-Agincourt. I want to pick up on the one particular part because I think it's a question that needs to be asked. They both alluded to — in the case of the member for Renfrew North— Conservative members, especially the backbenchers, now having to go back home and say to their constituents, "You will now

have to pay for OPP services where you never had to before," and the member for Scarborough-Agincourt I think quite eloquently pointed out that there are a number of services, everything from long-term care to a number of other services, that are being downloaded on to the municipalities, for which taxpayers are going to have to pay.

I guess the question that has to be asked is, what is the role of the Tory back bench? Is it the role of the Tory back bench, as it is the role of every member in this House, to come to the Legislature, to advocate for their constituents in order to make —

*Interjection.*

**Mr Bisson:** I wish I could explain what this is all about. I'll bring the photo, and he'll understand. I'm going to try to compose myself. We were on TVOntario last night, the member from across the way and myself, and we got our photo taken with Polkaroo and the member was making some comment.

But the point that I'm getting at, to the member opposite, the member for Nepean, I say the role of the Tory back bench, as it is every other member of this House, is to make sure that they come and advocate for their community. In this case, are they going back to their communities and saying that they agree with all of this downloading, that somehow they think the citizens in their communities are going to be further ahead having to pay more for all of these services?

**The Acting Speaker:** The member's time has expired. Comments and questions?

**Mr Baird:** I listened with great interest to my colleagues opposite. As usual, the member for Renfrew North kept the interest of the entire House during his remarks and had some thoughtful remarks. Having said that, the member for Scarborough-Agincourt spent most of the discussion on job creation, an issue I believe is the top priority for government. That's the issue the folks in Nepean certainly tell me on a regular basis is the top priority.

This government is certainly pursuing a broad-based approach, a broad-based number of policies to create jobs: cutting taxes to create jobs; cutting WCB premiums to create jobs; balancing labour laws to create jobs; cutting the employer health tax for small business to create jobs; cutting the deficit to create jobs; cutting red tape to create jobs. The member for Scarborough-Agincourt mentioned the 725,000 jobs. Obviously, as you pick up steam — we had to get the ship turned around, it was going in the wrong direction, and get it going in the right direction. I think it probably is best summed up in an article I read in the Toronto Star today: "Canadians, particularly the unemployed, will soon reap the benefits of 40 months of tough financial management." Do you know who said that? Paul Martin.

I was reading the documents from the Liberal member. We see real GDP up; CPI inflation index marginally down; employment growth up; interest rates on the way down again. I read again from Mr Martin's speech in the House of Commons yesterday, "There is a consensus both domestically and internationally that none of the seven major industrialized countries will do better than Canada



in 1997," and the honourable member certainly didn't bring that up.

What is important to put on the record is that in Ontario we're creating half the number of jobs in the country. We're leading the way on job creation, so we've got to work harder, we've got to do a better job, but the good news is that since 1995 our province, our ship, is going in the right direction: more jobs, more hope and more opportunity.

1710

**Mr Crozier:** I would like too to reply to the comments of my colleagues from Renfrew North and Scarborough-Agincourt. One thing they mentioned that I'm particularly interested in, because I served on a police services board for some five years, is that Bill 105 requires that five core services be provided by every municipality, those being crime prevention, law enforcement, assistance to victims of crime, public order maintenance and emergency response. Two of those are critical: crime prevention and law enforcement.

My concern there is that with the recent announcements of the government, where they're going to introduce 6,000 video slot machines, the most insidious, addictive little devices that you could ever have, what's going to happen then with crime prevention and law enforcement, with reduced resources because of the downloading of the recent Who Does What initiatives?

I'm concerned that police services in Ontario aren't going to have the opportunity or the resources to prevent crime when what the government is doing is putting out devices that only increase crime. In fact, they're putting them into communities that don't even want them. Toronto and North York, they don't want these gaming clubs; Kitchener-Waterloo, they don't want the gaming clubs; Downtown, Beaches, they don't want the gaming clubs. They know what it's going to cost in the way of community services and what it's going to do to their community. But what does the government say? "Hey, we know what's best for you. We need the revenue to pay for that borrowed \$20 billion for a tax cut, and you're going to have one of these clubs in your municipality whether you like it or not."

**The Acting Speaker:** The member's time has expired. The Chair recognizes the member for Nickel Belt.

**Mr Laughren:** I was able to hear virtually all of the remarks of the member for Renfrew North and some of the remarks of the member for Scarborough-Agincourt. They are both members to whom the government should listen.

It is going to be a sight to behold in the next year to two years as some of these Tory backbenchers go back home and get an earful from their constituents, because it's one thing to announce that there's a tradeoff between education taxes and other services and it's another thing to have those impact on the property taxes themselves. Of course at this time it's almost like an intellectual discussion, because people are not dipping into their pockets at this point. But I can see, when that all shakes down and when the contingency fund — and I'm including police services here in this regard. As a matter of fact, with police services it's almost like double jeopardy, because there are some communities that have not been

paying for their police services. They will be. On top of that, you'll have all the other downloading taking place as well, so it's going to be a fascinating time.

I think some of the Tory backbenchers might want to adopt an opposition member for visits back to their ridings, just to have somebody there to witness this and perhaps have some sympathy for what they will have to be going through in the next couple of years. It's going to get tough, and in my view, from time to time it's going to get ugly, because people will not tolerate that. They will not tolerate some of the tax increases that are being anticipated with this downloading. It's simply not going to —

**Mr Baird:** You speak from experience.

**Mr Laughren:** Well, I'm talking about the property taxes now. There's going to be a big difference and I think a lot of people in this province are going to be very unhappy.

**The Acting Speaker:** The member for Scarborough-Agincourt has two minutes to respond.

**Mr Phillips:** I'd like to pick up on the comments of the member for Nepean. He is right, I did talk about jobs a fair bit. All these things we are doing on all of these bills, we've been promised that the government's agenda is to create jobs. I say to all of us, we throw numbers around and what not, but the job situation is serious in Ontario. To look at the numbers, I actually was extremely surprised, as I think the government was and as I think every economist has been, at the lack of job creation in the last few months in Ontario. Something strange is going on, because the economy was quite buoyant at the end of 1996.

**Mr Baird:** That's not what you said then.

**Mr Phillips:** No, in any document, as recently as three or four weeks ago, I said the Canadian economy in 1997 will also be very good and the Ontario economy should be good. But jobs are not being created.

**Mr Guzzo:** We're better than the rest of Canada.

**Mr Phillips:** I hear the judge barking over there. I didn't mean to get angry about this, but this is terrible: 37,000 jobs lost in the last five months in the province of Ontario while the rest of Canada has gone up 72,000 jobs. Youth unemployment is a disaster, an absolute tragedy and a disaster. If we ignore this, if we all just get into a numbers game, "I've got better numbers than you've got," and do not recognize — I've never seen a reported youth unemployment rate in Ontario at 18.6%. I've never seen it. Even in the most difficult part of the early 1990s recession, it was never that high. There's something wrong, and if we just choose to barrack and argue back and forth, we're going to miss a major problem.

**The Acting Speaker:** Further debate? The member for Cochrane South.

**Mr Bisson:** It's with pleasure that I have an opportunity today to make some comments with regard to Bill 105. Where I would like to start is to talk a little bit about what the relationship of the police is and the history — not so much the history, but how, over a period of years within our parliamentary system here in Canada and in Ontario, we have built the relationship of the police, the courts, the lawmakers and the citizens in



such a way as to make sure that in the end all of those particular parts work, but more importantly are accountable to the people, and that we know in the end that it is a true system of justice.

As an example, we've long understood in our system that we believe the police are there primarily to do a couple of things. The first thing is that the police are there to enforce the laws, to make sure that they protect us, the citizens of the communities of our province, from situations of danger, to make sure as much as possible that they're able to stay on top of what's going on in our communities, to make sure we have a safe place to live. In doing that work that police officers do, I would say it is not a job that is easy. It is a job that over the years has become much more difficult because our society has changed, and it has been more difficult for the police.

I see a note coming over, and I'm not looking at it.

What has happened is that over the years —

*Interjection.*

**Mr Bisson:** We do have some fun sometimes. Anyway, the point I want to make here is that we have in Ontario, as we have across Canada, a police system that is free from political interference. We've understood that the police must operate independently from the Legislature and the Legislature independently from the police, and vice versa with the courts, so that we have some accountability in the system. We have painstakingly made sure over the years, through successive pieces of legislation, that the police become as accountable as possible, because we understand that if we have a police system or police departments that are sometimes not as accountable as they should be, awful bad things can happen with regard to the public and the people they serve.

So I'm a little bit — not a little bit; I'm quite concerned about where the government is going with Bill 105, because the government is in a way turning the clock back with regard to the relationship of the police and the citizens beyond the point that I think our society should be trying to turn ourselves back to. I understand where the Tories are coming from. The Conservatives that come here by and large are Reformers. They represent a —

*Interjection.*

**Mr Bisson:** It's true: by and large Reformers. They represent a view that I think is wrong in our society, that doesn't recognize that our province has changed, as our communities have changed, and that the police, along with that change, have had to keep up with it. Over a period of years, through successive governments, we have made sure the police have kept up with the changes within our communities and made sure our police are accountable, and I'd say the police forces across this province have done a good job.

It has not always been spot on. Nobody can make the claim of always being spot on, but the police, if you take a look at the Metropolitan police and if you take a look at the police of the city of Timmins or Sudbury, have done a fairly good job of keeping up with new technologies and, more important, keeping up with what happens in our communities, to make sure they don't do as they did a long time ago with regard to how they sometimes deal with particular citizens within our communities.

We've made sure that the public, if they feel there is a complaint that needs to be raised against the police, can do so without any form of reprisals.

There used to be a time in this province where the police had a lot of power, and if I as a citizen wanted to make a complaint against the police because the police had done something wrong, it would be basically up to the police chief to determine if I was to get a fair hearing. If the chief of police, as every chief of police would normally, I would expect, gave a certain understanding to his police officers, it was fairly difficult for citizens to bring forward those complaints and have them heard.

So the province over a period of years, as they've done across the country, put in place a police complaints commission. That police complaints commission was there to make sure that if the citizen had a complaint, the person's complaint could be heard both by the chief of police, because often that's where it should be dealt with, but at times, where necessary, outside of the police to make sure there was a fair hearing.

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That was done for good reason. That was done I think both for the protection of the police and the protection of the citizens. By and large that system has worked. It had been very resisted at first within police departments across the province when that first was introduced. A lot of police chiefs and a lot of police didn't appreciate that move on the part of the government that put that in place. I understand that, because it challenged them to be even more accountable than they were. That's difficult even for me, and it's difficult I'm sure for other members. We always think we're doing a good job. Any time somebody comes in and puts some sort of check in place to make sure we do our job better and there's some accountability, we take a bit of resentment to that. I understand the police for that, but that was put in place for good reason. It was put in place, as I said, to protect both sides on that particular argument.

What the government is doing in Bill 105 is taking away and dismantling the police complaints commission and returning us to a time where the police chiefs are the ones who are going to basically hear the complaint on the part of the citizen and then decide if there are any actions that need to be taken against the police officer. In some cases that might work, but there are many cases, which I'm sure my good friend from Renfrew alluded to, where quite frankly there have been some tragedies where people have not been treated fairly, to the detriment of our entire community.

I give you but one example. I don't say this to be provocative, but we look at things differently today in the 1990s, as a society, than we did in the 1950s or the 1960s. For example, I read with horror this morning, as you all did, in the Toronto Star the case at Maple Leaf Gardens, where a number of young boys were being sexually assaulted by workers at Maple Leaf Gardens. I raise that for a reason: that 20 or 30 years ago it would have been a lot more difficult for that now young man to come forward and to bring that complaint forward. It would have been very difficult, because it was the kind of thing that we didn't deal with in our society. But because times have changed and because our awareness



as a community of citizens has changed, and because we've grown to understand that certain actions are not desirable in our society, that young man today has come forward and there's a process to deal with what has happened and there will be an investigation.

I guess what I'm saying is that we look at the police complaints commission — I don't want to equate it to the situation at Maple Leaf Gardens, but I just say we have an independent system for a reason. It's to make sure that complaints of citizens are taken seriously and are dealt with. I want to say, and I don't mean to belittle police officers, because I think they work hard, they do a good job in their communities, and nine times out of 10 they get it right, but that one time they get it wrong, just as we get it wrong sometimes, it can have a very disastrous effect.

So I'm really leery of the government doing away with the police complaints commission, because I think that's really dangerous. There are I think certain sensitivities that we have to be aware of in our community today that may not be taken on the part of the police force if it's left to them to decide what's acceptable or not acceptable behaviour on the part of the police.

The other thing I would say I'm concerned with is the move the government is taking when it comes to the police services boards. In the city of Timmins, as in the city of Toronto or in Renfrew or Ottawa or wherever it might be where we have municipal police forces, there is the governing body of that police force that's called the police services board. A police services board is made up of appointees from both municipal governments in the province, but by majority the municipality does not control that board. Although the municipal ratepayers through their municipal council pay for the operation of the police department, it is the responsibility of the services board to determine what services need to be provided in that community based on the existing legislation. They are the ones who strike the budgets; they're the ones who decide how the police services are to operate.

Again, we did that for a reason, and that's what bothers me with this government. This government forgets the history of this province. They forget the experiences that we have seen. We put the police services under the control of the police services board for a good reason: because there used to be a time that there was municipal political interference within the police departments, and if you wanted to get off on something or you wanted to make sure that something was swept under the carpet, there was a time when you went to the municipal politician, and if he or she — normally he, because back then there were not many women in politics — managed to sweep some of that stuff under the carpet or make things not happen.

I can stand in the House, as the member for Renfrew did earlier, and raise a number of different cases, but we learn from that experience that the police forces must be independent from the political process. We, as provincial legislators, as municipal politicians, should not have any kind of say within the police forces when it comes to what they investigate and why they investigate it. If

there's a complaint that comes forward to the police because of something that happened in the municipality that is illegal, it is up to the police to do the investigation, and if there is basis, it is up to the police to lay charges.

I, for one, as I think most other members of the Legislature would agree, don't want to go back to a day where their job could be hampered by political interference of some politician at the municipal level, or the provincial level, for that matter. That is why we said, when we set up the police services boards, that municipal politicians would not control by majority that board. Yes, a municipality has a right to appoint people to the board, but they should not be controlled by a majority for a number of good reasons, because the police must remain independent from the municipality.

In this bill we are turning the clock back. That is a theme, I'm afraid, that is far more prevalent within this government than I'm comfortable with, where we're turning back to a day where the municipalities are going to have a lot more say about what happens within their police forces. I know the members from the government side could raise some logical arguments, saying that after all it's the municipalities that pay for the police, therefore municipalities should have the direction of what the budgets are. I understand, and I guess to a certain point I agree. Not entirely, but to a certain point that makes some sense.

I say again, as you are doing with the police complaints commission, that by changing the composition of the police services board, you are putting the police force in a very awkward position. I think police services boards have done a good job in this province. We've had some very dedicated people who have worked on those boards. They have tried to make sure that our municipalities are well protected and that we have good policies by which the police operate, and we have kept political interference out of those boards.

I'm very much afraid that by making it so the municipalities will now appoint, basically they'll control, the police services boards, we're going back into a situation where the police can be put in a very awkward position. It's part of the theme in this bill that really bothers me. We're really turning the clock back. We're going back to a day that the public has less and less say about what the police do and we're going back to a day where there could be potential for abuse that I think we should not tolerate in our society.

Those are two of the major points I have when it comes to how the police services are going to be operated in this province as a result of this particular bill: turning the clock back when it comes to the accountability of police services.

The other thing this bill does which I think is quite interesting — I don't say it's quite interesting; I think it's pretty nifty on the part of the government because every government has had to deal with this before. Our government had to deal with it. The Liberals prior to us had to deal with it. How do you deal with municipalities that don't have municipal forces, that are being policed by the Ontario Provincial Police?

There have been recommendations by different committees over the years that we as a province should



charge back to those municipalities that don't have their own municipal forces the services of the OPP. For example, in the town of Iroquois Falls or Matheson, where there isn't a municipal police force, there has long been a recommendation that the OPP charge back to the municipality those services and then back on to municipal ratepayers.

But the NDP government of Bob Rae decided not to do that, the same as the government of David Peterson, and for good reason. The government will stand and say, "Oh, it's because you didn't have the courage to make the decision." No. It's because we weren't stupid enough to make it, because we recognized that if you do that, it is not dealing with every citizen in the same way.

I get really tired of listening to the government argue equity on these issues, a government that really doesn't understand what equity is, I wonder sometimes. I just use this as an example. If I have a house in Iroquois Falls and the value of that house is, let's say, equal to one in Timmins — Timmins has the Timmins police; they have their own municipal police force — the taxes on that are probably, depending on the value of the house, let's say \$1,800 a year paid to the municipality. I have the same house, of equal value, out in Iroquois Falls. My municipal tax bill is about the same, it's about \$1,800, and the government says it's going to be fair if the citizens of Iroquois Falls have to pay for their police services just as the people in Timmins have to.

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The reality is that this is not what you're doing. You're going to end up pushing up the tax rate within the municipality of Iroquois Falls for those people in that community above what they're paying in Timmins to get a service they're already paying for. Police services in Ontario, in the case of Iroquois Falls and Matheson, are paid through their income tax and their provincial sales tax.

You're trying to go back by way of municipal property taxes to charge them for something they're already paying for. That's why we as a government said, "No, we're not going to do that." Backbenchers like Len Wood and I in that government and a whole bunch of others said, "There's no way we're going to allow our government to go back and charge police services to the communities that have the OPP policing them now."

Do you know what? The cabinet listened because they understood that backbenchers have a role to play, something I'm not sure this particular government understands. The member for Scarborough-Agincourt alluded to that a little while ago when he said, "Where are these Tory backbenchers?" I agree. While he was giving his speech, I don't remember which member it was, but someone across the way was going on about how this was good and how this was fair and how he was proud to go back to his community and tell them that he was doing these fine, wonderful things.

Wait till the tax bills come by. How are the citizens of Brant-Haldimand or whatever other riding going to feel when they have to pay more for community policing, something that they're already paying for through their retail sales tax and their provincial income tax? How are they going to feel? Are they going to be happy? I say no.

I think they're going to be upset. How are they going to feel when their municipal taxes go up because the provincial government has downloaded through the Who Does What process, or who does what to whom process, an entire level of services that come from the province on to the municipality?

I can tell you what those citizens are going to say. They're going to be mighty upset when the tax bill comes in the door by way of the mail slot. They're going to be really upset when they get their municipal tax bill two years down the road, because it won't take effect in this particular year; it's going to take effect in 1998. They will look at it and say, "All I know is that I used to pay \$1,800 a year in taxes and now I'm paying — what? — \$2,700." I can tell you they're not going to be too happy.

In the case of the city of Timmins it would be higher than that. If Timmins were to pass on to municipal taxpayers all the downloading the province has thrown on to Timmins, do you know how much of a tax increase I would get as a citizen, as a ratepayer? Forty-four per cent. I am now paying I think \$2,300 a year for my municipal taxes on my home, the home of my wife and me. Figure it out: 42% or 43% on \$2,300 is more money than most of us want to pay.

On top of that, we're having to pay user fees for absolutely everything, which is another issue that we get into. But I raise the point from this perspective. It seems to me that in a parliamentary democracy the responsibility of elected members is to make sure they are there as the voice of that community, to speak out as members of our community within this Legislature and to the government and by any other means available to us to advocate for our community, to make sure our community is heard and that our community is treated fairly.

I don't see this happening with this government. I see a back bench with the Tory caucus who by and large either believe this stuff ideologically and they're a gang of zealots or they're being whipped pretty well. They're being told, "You'll never get a chance at cabinet unless you say the lines we tell you to say, or you won't get the parliamentary assistant's job, or you won't get the trip we give out whenever there's a travelling committee to go on if you don't do what we as a government say you have to do."

I say there has to be, in a parliamentary democracy, a certain amount of freedom on the part of the members to advocate for their communities. I notice one thing in this particular Parliament. As I travel around this province from north to south, east to west, there are more citizens out there from all three political parties who say they're very uneasy about the way this government is conducting its affairs. They're really uneasy about the high-handedness, about how the government is making its decisions, about how it is not listening to the people, about how it's acting on its own, about how it's saying, "We're not going to listen whatever happens" — for example, in the city of Toronto with the referendum — "It doesn't matter what the people of Toronto or York or Etobicoke or Scarborough say." The government is going to do what it wants because, "We have a parliamentary majority."

Excuse me. That majority is not to be abused. One of the issues we should be talking about in this Legislature



is how we reform Parliament to make sure that people have confidence in our system of Parliament, to make sure that backbenchers on both sides of the House have some say, have some power to bring the views of our constituents to this assembly, to make sure we're accountable as elected officials.

I'm not talking about right to recall — I've never been a big fan of that — but I think we can reform Parliament and we can reform how this place works to restore confidence to the people of this province. That's one thing I've noticed: There's cynicism about politicians. We have done it to ourselves by actions such as we've seen with this government.

I say to the government across the way, I really have a hard time understanding the Conservative Party of Ontario, which for years has prided itself on having the support of rural Ontario. You've got ridings in rural Ontario where you can run absolutely anybody and they will get elected as a Tory. You can take the cow down the street, tie a bell around its neck, say it's a Tory and people would vote for it.

I don't mean that in a bad way. Understand what I'm saying. I'm just saying there are very traditional Tory ridings out there. I cannot understand for the life of me where those rural Tory backbench members are when they come into this Legislature and say, "Bill 105's a great thing for rural Ontario."

**Mr Preston:** Sure it is.

**Mr Bisson:** There they go: They say, "Sure it is." You go and tell your citizens when they've got to pay an extra \$300 to \$500 a year to cover the costs of the OPP on the basis of what you're doing in this bill. You go face those people at the election box. I'll tell you, they're going to be mighty upset with you. Go tell those people in rural Ontario when they find out that the property —

**Mr Preston:** That's NDP inflation.

*Interjections.*

**Mr Bisson:** They're proud about what they're doing so they've got to be zealots. I guess they're answering the question for me. I can't believe it. The Tories I think would want to hold on to their political base. That's one of the things we do as political parties, but it seems to me they're turning their backs on rural Ontario. They're looking at rural Ontario and they're turning their backs and saying, "We're going to do what the Premier says even if it's no good for rural Ontario, because we're Tories and we've been told to do that."

Come on. Your job is to come in here and represent the citizens. I can't believe that people in rural Ontario are going to say: "We're happy about paying another \$500 for municipal policing on the part of the OPP. We're so ecstatic we're going to run to the polls and support our Tory candidate."

I can't believe that rural Ontarians are going to run to the polls the next time and say: "I'm so excited about having to pay more for municipal services because the province has offloaded all this stuff on to our municipality. I'm running to the polls to support the Tories. I love paying more for municipal policing. I love paying more for housing that used to be a provincial responsibility. I'm thrilled about paying more for health care, because now my municipality's got to pay 50% of the costs for

health care and long-term-care facilities. Long-term-care services in the municipality — I can't tell you how pleased we are," says rural Ontario, "about how we now have to pay 50% for something that used to be paid by the province." They're really going to be excited.

**Mr Preston:** The same taxpayer.

**Mr Bisson:** The same taxpayer, exactly. I wish the Tories would read the Common Sense Revolution. They would recognize, when they talk about one taxpayer, that's exactly the point. These people, as all other Ontarians, are really going to get it because as you download all these services, they're both going to lose the services and in the end they're going to have to pay more. I don't believe for one second that if I were a rural member, especially a rural member in the Tory caucus, I'd be supporting this kind of legislation, because in the end it is the kind of stuff that will make rural Ontario go nuts.

I was at a committee this morning and I couldn't believe my ears. I never thought I'd see the day when the Canadian Taxpayers Federation would come into the Legislature, make a presentation to the legislative committee and say to this committee that they were mad at the Tories. I almost fell off my seat, because I know the Canadian Taxpayers Federation say it's an independent body and doesn't ally itself to any political party. I understand that, but the reality is that they've been pretty supportive of the Tories in Ontario; maybe not out west, but in Ontario they've been pretty supportive of the Tories over the years.

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I asked a particular deputant who came this morning to present on the megacity. I thought it was a very interesting presentation, because the Canadian Taxpayers Federation laid out in a way that was very clear how they understood that what this government was doing was going to lead to us having to pay more taxes in the province of Ontario. I thought they did a brilliant job.

I asked a question at the end of the presentation. I said: "I understand that the Canadian Taxpayers Federation had sent the Premier, the then leader of the third party, a questionnaire about how he felt about a number of issues. Can you tell me how the Premier answered?" The interesting thing was that the Canadian Taxpayers Federation said, "The Premier broke his promise on two particular issues around Metro Toronto." I said, "Well, how do you feel about that?" He said: "I feel terrible. These guys ran and told me they were going to make smaller governments; they're building larger governments. This government ran and said they were going to bring government closer to the people; they're making bigger bureaucracies."

We've got school boards that are going to be huge. The school board in my area is going to go from Muskoka all the way up to Hearst — one huge bureaucracy. It's unbelievable. And these guys talk about smaller government.

Then the government said in the Common Sense Revolution: "We're not going to download. Oh, no, we're not going to download, we're going to work with our municipal partners." And the Canadian Taxpayers Federation said, "They broke their promise on that one too."



I am saying to the members across the way, you should start reading the writing on the wall. When I start seeing the Canadian Taxpayers Federation come into this Legislature mad at the Conservatives, I think you're starting to have some problems. I think the writing is on the wall and we're soon going to start seeing the polls go down in a way that is not going to be very favourable to the Tories.

I have here a particular article on the part of an individual from Cochrane. I'm not going to read it word for word, but it's a particular individual who writes a letter to the editor in Timmins from Cochrane, who talks about how his community was devastated because of the Conservatives and their agenda and how it's affected the people of Cochrane. What I thought was interesting is, I would expect to see this signed by a member of OPSEU, as the Tories would say, or a teacher, as they like to make fun of teachers all the time, but it's signed by who? Clarke Shanks, president of the Cochrane Board of Trade.

When I talk to people on chambers of commerce all over northern Ontario, like in Hearst, they're mad at the government. I never thought I'd see the day. Chambers of commerce opposed to the Conservatives? But I'm telling you, it says something.

I think the Tory backbenchers need to start waking up. I hope you do for the sake of the province but I hope you don't for the fortunes of my political party. You have to come into this Legislature and you have to speak out for the people you represent, and you're not doing that. You're turning your backs on them.

The government, I think, is really sending this province down a road that we as a people are starting to feel uncomfortable with. It's something that is really a short-term political strategy that is really going to hurt us over the longer term.

I say to the government members and especially to those in the back bench and ministers without portfolio, because they couldn't quite get into cabinet, I say to the members across the way, go back to your cabinet caucus meetings, sit down with your Premier and your cabinet and tell them: "Listen, put the brakes on some of this stuff. This is going to hurt my community. I was elected to represent my community and my community ain't exactly happy with what the government is doing."

I understand you've got the right to make decisions, that's why you've got a parliamentary majority, but you should make those decisions based with some amount of common sense — something you seem to have lost, especially after the election of 1995 — but more importantly, with a bit of balance. You cannot govern this province from the perspective that you guys are, because quite frankly it's going to be disastrous.

I say to the government members across the way, Bill 105 is, as I say, a turning back of the clock on a number of very important issues and on a very important lesson that we have learned in this province when it comes to policing. It is going to put power in the hands of police chiefs that quite frankly I think a lot of police chiefs are going to be pretty uncomfortable with. You're going to be putting municipal councils and police forces in very difficult situations when it comes to potential political abuse on the part of municipalities.

I say all of this is not necessary. We've learned from the past there are ways of dealing with that and that's why we have the current legislation. So I say to the government across the way, rethink what you're doing.

In closing, I say this whole notion of somehow it's fairer for everybody to pay for policing across the province really needs to be debunked. People in Iroquois Falls, in Matheson and Cochrane, in Hearst and other communities like Kapuskasing, are paying for policing as it is. They pay it through their provincial sales taxes and their provincial income tax. When you check out the balance sheet when it comes to how much taxes they pay to municipalities, they're pretty equal on the same assessment.

I say to the government across the way, please rethink what you're doing because this bill is just another example of how the government is offloading a whole bunch of responsibility on to the municipalities and making them pay for services that should be services that are paid for by the province.

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Question or comments?

**Mr Guzzo:** Let me just say it's a pleasure to respond to the member for Cochrane South. It's a pleasure at all times to listen to him because he brings a local flavour each and every time he speaks, and I commend him for that.

But I want to explain one of the major differences between this party and the role of the backbencher and that of the Rae government. What we are dealing with today and what we deal with in legislation on a day-to-day basis is not new to us. This is the material that we told the leader of this party, in the years leading up to the election in 1995, we wanted to see. This is not handed down to us from Mike Harris. This is what came out of community meetings in church basements in every small town across the province. This is what we said we wanted. This is a response to the request to the people of our party and indeed our province, and that's why they responded to us in June 1995.

There's quite a difference from what happened in 1990. I don't have to talk about insurance, do I? If the honourable member for Welland-Thorold was here, he could explain to us the position of the party with regard to the insurance program and how it changed. It was not what the people requested, not what the government had suggested and not what the government had promised. In the first two years in government the Treasurer, the member for Nickel Belt, told us, "We'll spend our way out of this recession," and not to worry about the deficit, the deficit was no problem. It's \$100 billion later, a \$100-billion debt, and you harangue us and lecture us as to where we're going.

The taxpayers federation may have some disagreements, but everything's relative in this world. Don't ever forget it. We are sticking to our program and implementing it. It's our choice.

**Mr Michael Brown:** I'm most interested in the speech from the member from Timmins. I think he's made a large number of good points, particularly as it relates to rural Ontario and the increased costs that will be borne by every small municipal taxpayer in providing OPP services.



I've been around for a while and there certainly was and is an unfair problem with policing in terms of who pays. In the town of Espanola they have their own police force; they were paying and nobody else was. The argument was never that the others should pay; the argument was the provincial government should supply a fair amount of support to the town of Espanola or the city of Elliot Lake so that their property ratepayers did not have to bear that burden. That was the argument. It was about reasonable financing, about what is proper in terms of who pays for policing services.

The province has, as we know, quite a variety of ways of raising funds: income tax, sales taxes, a myriad of other ways, and increasingly we're seeing that gambling is what we want to raise revenues by. What will affect those people in the township of Spanish River, in the town of Webbwood, in the town of Massey, in Shedden, better known as Spanish to many of the people in this room, is that those property taxpayers cannot afford the burden of paying the OPP charges. It just will not work. He makes a good point.

1750

**Mr Carr:** I'm pleased to add a few comments to the member for Cochrane South. I must say, I know this is a difficult issue for those who have rural areas that haven't paid, but I will remind the member from the NDP of what the New Democrat Solicitor General said in December 1993: "It is our intention to implement equitable police financing, which means all Ontarians pay their fair share of policing, and right now we don't have that. We'd like to obviously do it as quickly as possible because we'd like to institute fairness."

The problem, as you know, is that unfortunately that government didn't last. But I will say to the member who sits next to the member who said that, during this period of time all solicitors general have felt this way. I know it's very easy in opposition to talk about some of the concerns, how you wouldn't have done it this way, but make no mistake about it — and I'm not even talking about whether you had the political courage to do it. You probably ran out of time in your mandate and so on, in spite of the fact it went five years, as long as any government had during that period of time. You ran out of time, but your colleague next door recognized that it had to be done.

I recognize it's not easy for those communities, of which yours probably has a great deal that are not, but make no mistake about it, had you, for whatever reason, continued on in government, your Solicitor General, your neighbour, your colleague in the next seat, would have continued on with the same process. The reason this was being done is because all governments recognize that it wasn't easy politically to do it but that in the interest of fairness across the province it had to be done. I understand where the member is coming from, but make no mistake about it, the quotes from his own government make it very clear that this would have happened in Ontario regardless of which government was in power.

**Mr Conway:** I want to just make a couple of observations. I should really start with the member from Cochrane, but I have to advert to the colourful intervention of my friend the judge. I just want to say, I was in

Kingston the other day and I was talking to the people of the islands, and they were at the community meetings. They were there with Holy Mike and Sainted Sally and they had the dialogue and they remembered what was said and what was committed, rather like the people who were at Fergus a couple of years ago and they heard Holy Mike say, "We wouldn't do this," and, "We will go forward and we will incorporate the views of the islanders and the views of the good people in Wellington," and, "We were not into this kind of amalgamation business," and, "There will not be NDP-like tolls for you, the good people of Wolfe and Amherst islands."

I say to my friend the judge, there is no tool that can properly measure the incredulity of those people on the islands today, who ask now of Holy Mike and Sainted Sally: "Was there a hearing problem? Was there a learning disability?" What pray tell could explain a policy that was supposed to bubble up in precisely the way that his honour has referred to that has produced just the very reverse of what Holy Mike and Sainted Sally promised the good people of the islands in the area of Kingston city? I won't get into what was said at that meeting in Fergus a couple of years ago.

We are all sinners in this business, and I perhaps more than most, but I want to say to my friend the judge, I think he doth protest too much in pointing an accusatory finger at our friend from Timmins.

**The Speaker:** The member for Cochrane South.

**Mr Bisson:** To the members for Algoma-Manitoulin and Renfrew North, I thank you very much for your comments. I want to pick up on the comment from the member for Ottawa-Rideau. As the member for Renfrew North pointed out, I remember too those meetings in the church basements across northern Ontario, where the then third party made a number of promises to the people in northern Ontario, as they did across the province. They promised they were not going to download services on to municipalities. What have they done? They have broken that promise. They promised that they were not going to take one cent from education. They're doing quite the contrary; they're taking \$1 billion out, not one cent. They promised that they were going to create 175,000 jobs per year; they haven't done that one either. They promised a whole bunch of things within this Common Sense Revolution that they're not keeping to. So I say to the member across the way, to the good judge, the member for Ottawa-Rideau, don't come here and talk about keeping promises. The reality is, you guys have done an about-face on promises like I've never seen.

I remember Mike Harris and the third party promising that they would not introduce any casinos in the province without the municipality having a referendum. I guess they held that promise. They're not introducing one casino, they're introducing 44 casinos, not without referendums. So I would say that is a broken promise.

To the member for Oakville South —

**Mr Michael Brown:** Six thousand slot machines.

**Mr Bisson:** Six thousand slot machines, exactly. The member for Oakville South talks about the former Solicitor General, Mr Christopherson, making a speech where he said that he was going to move to charge citizens in towns like Iroquois Falls the cost of police servicing. I say to the member across the way, it was the



NDP back bench, myself and other NDPers, who said to the minister and who said to the rest of the cabinet at caucus, "You do that, you're going to have a war on," and the government didn't do it. We said we recognized that it was a problem for our communities and we spoke up for our communities, something that I wish the Tory backbenchers would do for their communities. I stand on —

**The Speaker:** Further debate?

**Mr Leadston:** Unlike my honourable colleagues opposite who very eloquently this afternoon, and rather disjointedly, have spoken about every topic under the sun other than Bill 105, I'm going to focus on Bill 105 and conclude.

The police officers, the men and women who serve our community, who serve our cities and our province, who serve to protect the citizens of Ontario, currently have four levels of supervision from the provincial government and one or more from the individual police departments. The province has a special investigations unit, the Ontario Civilian Commission on Police Services, the office of the police complaints commissioner and the board of inquiry.

The police officers who serve us in our province have a very difficult job, an extremely difficult job. They have to react rather quickly to life-threatening situations. They can't refer things to a committee like we do in the House. They can't sit down with a subcommittee and study it for a month and then decide to act. They have to act within split seconds. They also should be well informed of their boundaries and the boundaries given to them so that they cannot delay in making that correct decision that would affect their lives and the lives of others.

For that reason, this government is proposing in the legislation to combine the Ontario Civilian Commission on Police Services, the office of the police complaints commissioner and the board of inquiry into one singular body, which will be called the Ontario Civilian Commission on Police Services.

This new commission will be under the jurisdiction of the Solicitor General and will have a broad range of responsibilities, including the current mandate of the existing same-name commission, as well as the following additional oversight abilities:

It will have an appellate function from the disposition of local oversight matters. They will review the role of all public complaints that are dealt with locally and not resolved to the satisfaction of the public complaints. On its own motion, they will conduct inquiries respecting these complaints. We will merge the current complaint and discipline systems into one, streamlining and simplifying the system.

There are transitional provisions to deal with disciplinary proceedings and public complaints which are not resolved by the time these amendments come into effect.

The special investigations unit will continue as a separate oversight agency with responsibilities for overseeing police conduct resulting in serious injury or death. This agency will continue to be under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of the Attorney General.

This legislation provides a simplified and accessible means of filing a complaint. Very simply, the complainant only needs to write a letter. There are no prescribed forms, no red tape. They can deliver that via the mail, fax or in person or by an agent to either a police station, a detachment of the relevant police service or to the new Ontario Civilian Commission on Police Services. The system will be more accountable. They will have a 30-day initial response time for public complaints: no more six months, no more two years.

The police service amendments have been developed to achieve more important goals while not losing sight of our firm commitment to Ontario's safety in our province.

I sat as a police services member for over five years. I was a police officer for over eight. I was chairman of our Waterloo Regional Police Services Board. There were many occasions where when we asked the agencies with the previous governments to act on various complaints and difficulties that the police services board at that time was encountering, some of them are unresolved. I believe the member from — is it Holt Renfrew or Renfrew North? No. I'm sorry — Renfrew North.

*Interjection.*

**The Speaker:** On that high note, it being past 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 10 o'clock tomorrow.

*The House adjourned at 1801.*



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No. 166

N° 166

ISSN 1180-2987

**Legislative Assembly  
of Ontario**

First Session, 36th Parliament

**Assemblée législative  
de l'Ontario**

Première session, 36<sup>e</sup> législature

**Official Report  
of Debates  
(Hansard)**

**Journal  
des débats  
(Hansard)**

**Thursday 20 February 1997**

**Jeudi 20 février 1997**



**Speaker**  
Honourable Chris Stockwell

**Clerk**  
Claude L. DesRosiers

**Président**  
L'honorable Chris Stockwell

**Greffier**  
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# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 20 February 1997

# ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 20 février 1997

*The House met at 1002.  
Prayers.*

## PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

### HOSPITAL RESTRUCTURING

**Mr Sean G. Conway (Renfrew North):** I move private member's notice of motion number 43:

Whereas the Harris government is closing hospitals in communities across Ontario, and thereby threatening patients' access to care when and where they need it; and

Whereas the new hospital bed standard that is being imposed by the government's restructuring commission is overly aggressive and unrealistic, especially in rural and northern Ontario; and

Whereas the downloading of responsibility for long-term care on to municipalities will put additional pressure on the hospital sector;

Therefore, be it resolved that in the opinion of this House the Ontario Ministry of Health must develop a hospital restructuring policy that properly addresses such factors as the need for core hospital services, the availability of non-hospital alternative care and the geographic realities of rural and northern Ontario.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson):** Mr Conway has 10 minutes.

**Mr Conway:** I come before the House this morning as a member of the Legislature for an eastern Ontario constituency that in very recent weeks has faced severe cuts to its hospital sector.

I have raised on previous occasions the decision of the hospital restructuring commission made on December 3, 1996, which will close the Pembroke Civic Hospital. In so doing, with that decision, the Harris government will take out of our community, a small city in eastern Ontario, \$14 million of annual hospital budget. We are going to lose not just a century-old facility, we're not just going to lose \$14 million annually in terms of hospital budgets in Pembroke, but we're going to lose 300 jobs.

The report of the restructuring commission in respect of Pembroke also calls for dramatic cuts in areas like chronic care. The Pembroke report of the hospital restructuring commission recommends that the city of Pembroke, which now has 70 chronic beds, go down to 18 chronic beds. This is a huge cut in an area where we've already got unmet pressures.

The government's commission has been through not just Pembroke but Sudbury, Thunder Bay, it's been to Sarnia and into Petrolia, and I hear this morning it will very shortly be in Ottawa, Toronto and London. People increasingly across the province are becoming concerned about the range and depth of the Harris government's

cuts to the hospital sector. It is a matter of record that this provincial government led by Mr Harris has cut more deeply into hospital budgets than any other provincial government across Canada.

Just a few weeks after the Pembroke Civic Hospital was closed, hospitals in Arnprior, Renfrew, Barry's Bay and Deep River in my eastern county of Renfrew were told that they would lose another \$1.6 million — that on top of the \$14 million net loss to Pembroke. That means that just in the last few weeks in my county of less than 100,000 people, we've been told by this government to get ready to lose \$16 million-plus on an annual basis. There is no doubt, as people are now starting to observe, that this is cutting into patient care.

We have on the record in just the last few weeks the tragic testimony of Paul Kaihla, a distinguished Maclean's reporter, about the circumstances of his father at the Sault Ste Marie Plummer. We had last week the testimony of several of the Peterborough medical society, which doctors wrote in the public domain that the cuts in Peterborough are now serious and threatening patient care. Just a few days after that letter, we have the tragic story of an 82-year-old man who was found by his family dead on a hospital cot in the corridors of the Peterborough Civic Hospital.

**Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin):** It's outrageous.

**Mr Conway:** It is outrageous, and it is deeply worrisome to families and caregivers across the province. The Kaihla story in the Sault at the Plummer, the case of the 82-year-old man in Peterborough are but two examples of evidence to support the claim made in recent days by the president of the Ontario Hospital Association, Mr David MacKinnon, who strongly urges the current government to stop, look and listen in terms of its hospital cutting and its restructuring policy.

David MacKinnon is no wild-eyed radical. He's a long-serving Ontario public servant just recently made president of the Ontario Hospital Association. He said to a legislative committee just in the last few days, "The Harris government's current policy towards restructuring of hospitals and the health system as a whole is seriously flawed and must be fundamentally changed before irreparable damage is done." He goes on, does the president of the Ontario Hospital Association, "Unless changes are made, the people of this province will face reduced access to care and the quality of that care may decline significantly."

We have a commission that is travelling around and about the province, the so-called Health Services Restructuring Commission, that is acting as the government's agent. These are good people, well intentioned to be sure, but they are using as one of their principal planning tools a new hospital bed standard. I repeat today what I've



asked the Minister of Health on a number of occasions earlier this month. I want the government of Ontario to tell me today which Ontario hospitals are today meeting that new hospital bed planning standard they are using to restructure Ontario hospitals, to shut down hospitals in Pembroke and Sudbury and Thunder Bay and to substantially reorganize hospitals in Sarnia and Lambton.

1010

Give me and the people of Ontario the hard copy, the list of those health care institutions, those hospitals that are today meeting your standard. I don't think you can because I don't think there are any hospitals that as entire facilities today are meeting that standard, but I'm quite prepared to be proven wrong and incorrect. I say again to the parliamentary assistant, give this House the list of those hospitals meeting that standard.

All of this cutting to the hospital sector — \$1.3 billion to be taken out of the hospital sector in just three years — comes before we have the downloading of long-term care and home care and ambulance services on to the land tax, the property tax. As the chair of the Health Services Restructuring Commission, Dr Sinclair, said, that is wrong-headed policy and is going to make the ambition of an integrated health delivery system very much more difficult to achieve. But these billion-dollar cuts to the hospital sector that are causing such angst in places like Pembroke and Sudbury and Peterborough and Chatham and Thunder Bay and soon Ottawa, London and Toronto, are coming before the downloading of home care and long-term care to the land tax, to the property tax.

I met recently in my community with all the administrators of the homes for the aged and nursing homes and they are apoplectic at what they are going to do. In Pembroke we are told we have to give up 70% of our chronic hospital beds at a time when we're having very real difficulties meeting the needs of the long-term-care patients. My constituents with elderly relatives are asking me now, "Where are we going to take our grandparents, our parents?" It's bad now; you reduce by 65% the chronic care capacity in the Pembroke hospital centre and these caregivers tell me a bad situation is quickly going to get much worse.

I say most sincerely to the House and to the parliamentary assistant, stop, look and listen to what doctors in Peterborough, constituents in Pembroke and the president of the Ontario Hospital Association are telling you.

A final observation, as a member from rural Ontario: I firmly believe that the health ministry's current planning standard fails to adequately address the particular health care and cultural needs and realities of rural and northern Ontario. I look at the Pembroke report and I look at the comparison of utilization rates. Yes, it's very clear what the standard is. It's a standard that's currently being met in — where? — Toronto, Ottawa, London and Hamilton. The larger the urban community with the greater collection of existing institutional services, the better the communities perform.

You get out into the rural Ottawa Valley, you get up into northern Ontario, and you notice that the utilization rates are substantially higher. I believe that one of the reasons for that is that the current planning standards just

do not adequately address the rural and northern needs of Ontario. I represent people in places like Palmer Rapids and Rolphton and Whitney where now it's a one to one-and-a-half-hour drive to Pembroke; it's a two to two-and-a-half or three-hour drive to Ottawa. These people are terrified that this new planning standard is going to undermine their access to quality health care, particularly in the hospital sector.

**The Acting Speaker:** Further debate? The Chair recognizes the member for York South.

**Mr Gerard Kennedy (York South):** It is at once a pleasure and problematic to take part in this debate. I want to thank my colleague from Renfrew North for raising this matter, but at the same time of, course, my colleague from Renfrew North is trying to make sense of the unfathomable: the hospital policy of this government. The assumption that there might be a germ somewhere, a scintilla of sense to the approach that this government is taking is what underlines the good faith of the motion we have before us today; that somewhere within the government's approach to hospitals is logic; that somewhere within it might be some evidence-based practice, some idea of what actually could be done for the betterment of health care.

As the Liberal health critic, I've had opportunity to look in detail at what the hospital restructuring commission is doing, what premises it's based on, and what we have is a hugely academic exercise using models. Some of the answers that my colleague may get from the success of this motion would show him, I believe, standards that are completely unrealistic and completely unsuited to the Ontario experience.

Let's go back a bit and look at the genesis of the Harris hospital mess in Ontario, generated exclusively by this government, an atmosphere of fear and concern generated by decisions made by this government: the passage of Bill 26; the suspension of normal rights of appeal, of democratic intercourse with their government for the towns and the cities affected by the hospital restructuring's attentions — totally wiped out by the new acquisition of powers by the Minister of Health to go around this House, to go around the normal channels of democracy, and instead to give those powers to unelected officials appointed to carry the bag for this government, unwilling to state its opinion on the most important issue of the day, which is, what the standards are going to be for health care in this province, a government bereft of its own ideas of what that responsibility is. In even reducing health care down to these little methodologies — and I'll say in a minute where those little methodologies came from — but to make it an academic exercise shows a profound lack of understanding on the part of this government of what health care is all about.

Certainly, it takes the "care" completely out of health care. That's what the Conservative government has done with the appointment of a hospital restructuring commission that sees no emotional connection on the part of small towns, on the part of patients with the care they're supposed to be getting in these institutions. Instead, the government cannot move off an interpretation of hospitals as lines on a budget, as moneys to be extracted.



And what does this government hope to obtain? The other decision this government made, uniquely, was to cut \$1.3 billion from hospitals over the course of three years, a historical slashing of health institutions in this province, done, one would hope, after some level of deliberation, some level of study, some level of comprehension; but no, instead done by a government desperate for cash, a government that wants to tithe — more than tithe; decimate, literally and beyond — the function of hospitals to pay for new needs in the health care sector, to pay for the cash flow they require for a \$5-billion-a-year tax cut, a sad and sorry sacrificing of the wellbeing and the health of people in this province.

The consistency, of course, is there in terms of the genesis of this. We see this government again abrogating its own responsibility, deciding it can't stand up and doesn't have the courage to tell Ontarians where it is coming from in health care. Does it believe people should still get services in hospitals, or does it want it to be in the community? Does it want those to be one monolithic, integrated institution, or does it have some regard for competition and flexibility and service responsiveness? None of those things is this government prepared to tell us. Instead, as it has done in other areas, as it proposes to do with the megacity in Toronto, as it proposes to do with the education system, it hands off the responsibility that we're paid to do in this House to handle and find political solutions to the problems of the day. This government has abandoned its responsibilities and gotten rid of those difficult problems, it believes.

It has handed it off to an academically based — we say that; we'll give them some due; some people who have some background certainly in terms of the field of health, but it's handed them a dirty assignment. It has not said to them, "What's in the best interests of patients, of the people of Ontario in terms of the health care system?" It has said to this restructuring commission: "We're cutting 18%, \$1.3 billion across the board, and you're the executioner. You've got to go out there and do this according to these guidelines." We've seen time and time again that this restructuring commission has been willing to do that.

Out of Thunder Bay it's taken a profit of \$41 million for this government in excess cuts over any so-called reinvestment. That's \$41 million worth of health care that those residents of Thunder Bay won't have, and we're going to find that repeated over and over again.

1020

The formula has come not from an academic, detached entity but rather from the Ministry of Health itself. What people don't realize is that even though the health restructuring commission hasn't yet made it to their town or city, the district health councils have been working in anticipation. Those district health councils have been handed off formulas. Health care is now reduced to formulas: 70% day surgery; all kinds of allocations based on notional ideas of what things could be.

What I would recommend to anybody listening to this important debate raised by the member for Renfrew North is to sit down and talk to your hospital administrator and ask your hospital administrator a couple of questions. Ask them whether they're experimenting with

your health, because the formulas engaged by the Ministry of Health, even though it tries to skirt around it, the Ministry of Health and the district health councils, those formulas are causing the people responsible — the boards and the administrators of hospitals — to experiment with people's health.

I spoke with one administrator who used the ministry formula for releasing pregnant mothers and who found instead, a year later, that not only was it harmful to their health to put them out of hospital that soon, but the readmission rates were so high it cost money.

That's what happens when a government won't take its responsibility, when a government runs away from the tough decisions, when a government won't stand up for health care in this province in a most fundamental way. We've heard this week and last week the cost that lack of gumption on the part of this government has, the price that having no courage when it comes to health care exacts.

We've heard of an 82-year-old man who died in the hallway in Peterborough, a hallway cluttered with stretchers because of the millions of dollars in cuts that have taken place, because the cuts are taking place completely out of sync, without even the pretence of hospital restructuring. There's no connection between them.

Now we know, as of yesterday, that the association representing all the hospitals in the province, whose initial judgement was to go along with the government — which I'm sure many citizens out there would like to do as well, would like to believe that when the government embarks on this kind of hazardous activity, changing systems that have been around for 15 and 20 years on the turn of a dime, they have a plan. We now have the association representing the institutions most affected saying yesterday that this plan is flawed, it's haphazard and second rate.

We know now that the minister, Dave Johnson, the part-time health minister, wears no clothes. We know now that the Tory caucus, who across the province have been making noises about hospitals, who have been saying, "We'd like to keep these hospitals," that that's just noise. Instead, every single member of the Tory caucus has proved unwilling to stand up for decent health care. They must be aware. In fact, I happen to know they're aware.

I have here a speech given by the head of the OHA to the Health Policy Advisory Council of the Ontario Progressive Conservative Party. This was a speech given to the members opposite to give them a chance to realize that health restructuring based on formulas that don't have any application to reality is wrong, that it's bad for the people they represent, that it's hazardous to the health of the people they represent. They were told this, in confidence, in privacy. They were given a chance to do something different.

On January 20, the members opposite were told that this can't be done. A significant price is going to be paid. The changes that hospitals are making "will impair the system," and "For the third year...all bets are off," because "the third year targets" cannot be achieved without "reductions in services."



This government knows. It's not even a question of whether they've got the best formulas; they know it's impossible. It can't be done. Yet on February 1 of this year, they persisted.

**The Acting Speaker:** Let me express to the member for Nickel Belt, I'm sorry for the lack of protocol accorded to him before the last speaker. Now the Chair recognizes the member for Nickel Belt.

**Mr Floyd Laughren (Nickel Belt):** Thank you, Mr Speaker. If that's the worst you ever do to me, I will not be concerned.

I wanted to take a few minutes of the time allocated to our caucus to talk about hospital restructuring and to commend the member for Renfrew North for bringing this before the House.

Basically, what it's doing, for those who tuned in late, is calling upon the Ministry of Health as it goes about hospital restructuring to think about special factors, such as core hospital services that are required, non-hospital alternative care, which I gather means community-based care, and some of the realities of rural and northern Ontario.

I can tell you that I have no problem with the need for hospital restructuring in this province, and I doubt very much if the member for Renfrew North does either, although I don't want to put words in his mouth. As a matter of fact, it was our government that started the whole hospital restructuring process, so I don't have any problem with the need for that.

But I do recall, when we started the process, the enormous pressure put on us by the opposition at that point, the Tories in opposition and, quite frankly, the Liberals as well, for us to make sure that every dime saved in a community was reinvested in that community, reinvested in community-based care or in capital or whatever; whatever savings were achieved in a community, they'd have to be reinvested in that community. We thought long and hard about that and finally we agreed to do that.

This government refuses to do that. They say they're not cutting health care, but they will not reinvest savings in the local community. If that's the case, where are those savings going? They're going to one of two areas: They're going to go into places like Toronto or Ottawa, and I don't believe that either. Therefore, it's going to meet their fiscal bottom line, namely, the tax cut. That's what it's for. That's what this is all about.

I would not be upset with hospital restructuring. I might have problems with some of the specifics, but I would be more supportive if I thought this hospital restructuring was being done for the right reasons. But this hospital restructuring is being done, plain and simply, for that tax cut which you seem determined to believe that your well-heeled friends need more than people in the community need good health care.

**Mr Garry J. Guzzo (Ottawa-Rideau):** Why did you close the beds? How many beds did you close? Who did you give the money to? What did you do with the money?

**The Acting Speaker:** Order, please. Order.

**Mr Laughren:** I think the judge should crawl back under his bench.

*Interjections.*

**The Acting Speaker:** Order.

**Mr Laughren:** Crawl back underneath your bench, Judge. We don't need your heckling. Wait until the restructuring commission comes to Ottawa and see what your reaction will be then.

*Interjections.*

**The Acting Speaker:** Order.

**Mr Laughren:** I can tell you, I am not opposed to hospital restructuring. Even in Sudbury, where they've closed two out of the three hospitals and they're going to replace them with one large hospital, I have not been critical of that. I think that needs to be done. It'll be interesting to see how the Tory backbenchers, like the ones from Ottawa, react when the hospital commission leaves town after having made its decision there.

There are some areas where I think the Ministry of Health needs to get it back together. They have given the Health Services Restructuring Commission certain responsibilities but other responsibilities they've kept unto themselves, such as labour adjustment when hospitals are closed and layoffs occur, such as the capital sharing. They said it was 70-30 in one community; they did not say it was 70-30 in every community. I haven't heard them say that and they need to make it clear that the capital sharing will be at least 70-30 in all communities.

Also, they need to tell us what's going on with community-based care that's in this resolution by the member for Renfrew North. There has been no commitment in my community that any savings will be put back into community-based care. All they're doing is closing hospitals. It makes no sense whatsoever. The restructuring commission is doing its job, given its mandate, but the Ministry of Health isn't looking after the other half of the equation and saying, "What about capital, what about reinvestment, what about community-based care?" They have refused to do that. We shouldn't be surprised —

**Mr Peter L. Preston (Brant-Haldimand):** We continually said that.

**Mr Laughren:** Well, come to my community and say it. We shouldn't be surprised when the head of the Ontario Hospital Association, Mr MacKinnon — whom I know and respect; I think he has served this province very well over the years and he's hardly anybody's political pawn, I can tell you that — comes out and says that what the government is doing is wrongheaded and too fast. They've got to slow down and think about it and do it properly. He said that before a legislative committee.

1030

I can tell you that I am for hospital rationalization. That's clear from public comments I've made in my own community and elsewhere. But I am very, very suspicious of exactly what it is that's motivating this government when it closes hospitals and restructures the health care system. Nobody believes that it is being done so we get a better bang for our buck in the health care system. If that was what was motivating this bunch of Tories, then I would be supporting them. But that's not what's motivating them. What's motivating these Tories is simply the bottom line so they can give the tax cut to the most prosperous citizens in this province. Nothing more, nothing less.



You should not be surprised, my friends, when there's resistance in the community, because it's so transparent that what you're doing has nothing to do with better or more rational health care; it has to do with paying for the tax cut. That tax cut is going to cost about \$5 billion a year in revenue and you have to make that up somewhere as you try and reduce the deficit, and guess where the biggest spending occurs. It's in health care and it's in education. You can trim all the other programs and you won't get to the dollars you need to provide that tax cut. You have to go after health care and you have to go after education, so no one should be surprised that those are the two areas where you're spending most of your time in cutting programs.

In conclusion — I want to save some time for my colleague from Cochrane South — I simply say that I will be supporting and we will be supporting this resolution from the member for Renfrew North, not because of the need for rationalization but because of the motivation that lies behind what this government is doing.

**Mrs Helen Johns (Huron):** It's a pleasure to join in the debate today. I first would like to say that this government is listening to the people of Ontario and we care incredibly about the quality of health care in the province of Ontario.

The OHA and a number of different organizations have agreed that restructuring has to happen. As we all know, hospital beds have been closed throughout the province over the past eight to 10 years. In fact I have the numbers now that say that in the Liberal time frame 1,200 beds were closed across the province, but with the NDP 8,800 beds were closed. So I'm not surprised that the member for Nickel Belt agrees that something had to be done. They didn't have the nerve to take the final step to be able to do something. They closed beds all across Ontario but never turned out the lights, never stopped paying taxes, heat, light, hydro on the buildings. It's outrageous that we continue to do those things.

Money has to be focused on the patient. The patient is the most important issue when it comes to quality of care and health care in Ontario. I know after I finish speaking today the member for Nickel Belt will be supporting me in my opposition to this resolution because he will see that we truly are reinvesting money back into health care. I know the member for Nickel Belt is a very informed and well-versed and long-standing member here and will know that when he looks at the financial statements of this place he sees that more money has been invested in health care from this government than was when he was elected and a member of the ruling party, I guess would be the way to say it.

In June 1995 the government was spending \$17.4 billion in health care, and at the end of our first fiscal year it was \$17.7 billion. So even though we have made some reinvestments, we continue to have a strong and ever-growing commitment to health care.

Along the line, though, we all recognize that technologies have changed, that the world is a different place than when we built these hospitals in the 1950s and the 1960s and we have to change the way health care is funded in the province. Even the Ontario Hospital Association recognizes this. I have a statement that the

member for Renfrew North started to speak about but he never finished the comments. It says:

"OHA and its members have been, and continue to be, supportive of restructuring in the hospital sector. Restructuring has been made possible by the successes of hospitals in introducing new technology, drug therapies and innovations in the delivery of patient care. These have led to reductions in lengths of stay, a significant shift to outpatient and ambulatory care, which in turn reduces the need for facilities, beds and resources for acute inpatient care."

If we listen to the Liberal members today, they would have us believing we're kicking people out of hospitals before they're ready to come out. This truly says, as doctors and the Ontario Hospital Association are saying, that technologies have changed, our ability to treat people more quickly has changed, and we need to change the way that hospitals work in the province.

It's very important to recognize that we have no cookie-cutter approach to restructuring in Ontario. What we say is that the district health council must come forward and tell us what makes sense locally in their community. The district health council comes to us. It presents from the community what should happen in their community to meet the ever-changing needs. Then the restructuring commission comes in.

If we were to listen to what they said across the way, I could make the decision just sitting here in the back row at Queen's Park and everybody would have exactly the same hospital system, but we don't do that. The restructuring commission goes in, talks to people in the community, talks to the district health council, looks to see what the community needs, and with that comes a report. This is very locally driven, something that I, as a representative of rural Ontario, feel very strongly about. My decisions should not be Toronto-based, nor will they be.

The members seem to be talking about us taking this money and siphoning it into some unknown place other than health care. It's really important for everyone today to recognize that the reinvestments in health care are substantial. We have had to make reinvestments to be able to make the health care system work better for all of us. If we left everything as the status quo, as the honourable opposition would like me to do, then we would have no new technologies, no ability to deal with some of the doctors' concerns in Ontario, no ability to have emergency services for my people. Since this government has come to power we have given \$70 an hour for evenings and weekends to allow my emergency room in rural Ontario to stay open. We have made some substantial changes to help rural Ontario meet the needs of its people, and this has to happen as we continue to evolve health care so that it meets every one of our needs.

I'd like to talk a little bit about some of the investments that are important for us. I've talked about the \$70 an hour, and 90% of the rural hospitals in Ontario have tapped into and are using this fund to keep their emergency rooms open and available to people. One of the things I felt quite strongly about as a rural member was that people could not go to the emergency room at night with their little children and not wonder if there was



going to be somebody there to help them. We've rectified this situation and we continue to do that.

We have made reinvestments in paramedic training. In my riding and other areas about rural Ontario all across the province we have put defibrillators in ambulances. We can save people's lives with defibrillators; we can move them. We need to have these reinvestments.

We've reinvested \$14 million back into northern hospitals. We've put \$10 million into community-sponsored contracts, which allow hospitals that have never had the opportunity to get a doctor, or have been without a doctor for a substantially long time, to have doctors. In Vernon, for example, we have a doctor who came to them as a result of one of these community-sponsored programs. What happens in these cases is that they come into the community and they provide services for a fixed fee. In this particular case, the gentleman's fiancée came to a town close by, so we got two doctors into two areas which had always had trouble with doctors and physicians' services.

The recent agreement with the physicians has made a substantial difference to rural Ontario, another reinvestment to rural Ontario, because it has allowed us to move doctors from areas where we have too many doctors to areas where they need to be. That has to be, in many cases, rural northern Ontario. It's definitely outside five core areas where we're overserved at this particular point.

We're making many changes because we believe this is the right way to go. We have a strategy that will integrate health care in Ontario and allow us to bring services to people where they need them, when they need them and at the time they need them.

Today's resolution suggests we don't care about rural Ontario and I'd like to say that rural Ontario is the basis for many of our reinvestments in health care. We are not doing a cookie-cutter approach across Ontario; we are working hard to find solutions that meet the needs of rural Ontario.

1040

**Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines):** I want to commend the member for Renfrew North for bringing this resolution forward. If there's one issue that is worrying the people in this province and indeed in many parts of this country, it's the issue of health care.

In the Niagara region we are already underfunded by approximately \$25 million, according to authoritative sources, for all the services we require, yet we have a local hospital restructuring commission, faced with another \$44-million cut in funding for hospitals, recommending now that certain hospitals close or have their role changed drastically.

That report was entitled *Made in Niagara*. It was made anywhere but in Niagara. It was developed by a consulting company from Toronto which has used its same pattern in many other areas, but also the policy is developed here in Toronto. If you're going to take \$44 million out of hospital funding in the Niagara region, that means the local commission has no alternative but to recommend the closing of hospitals.

If you didn't have that hammer hanging over the head of the local hospital restructuring commission, my guess

would be that the report would be drastically different. They have called for the closing of the Hotel Dieu Hospital in St Catharines, which has an oncology division that is second to none and a kidney dialysis division and several other important services of a specialized nature. That is destined to be closed by this government's policies.

In Port Colborne thousands of people showed up for a public meeting; in Fort Erie they showed up for Douglas Memorial Hospital; in Niagara-on-the-Lake there was a large delegation out; in Grimsby, the largest gathering of people ever. I understand that today in Kitchener-Waterloo they're announcing that they're going to lay off hundreds of hospital workers, 350, something of that magnitude.

We have an aging population in the province, particularly in the Niagara Peninsula, where people on average are older than in other areas and where older people, it's a fact of life, will need hospital services more than others. This government has lots of money to give to a tax cut for rich people in this province, lots of money for that. Make no mistake about it: That's what these cuts are motivated by. I'm sure that many people in the government caucus never realized how much was going to be cut to feed this tax cut which benefits the wealthy people to the greatest extent.

Dr Ron Casselman, who is a urologist in St Catharines, made I thought an excellent point before the commission when he quoted a special report from an expert in the field, who said: "You can't rush into the closing of these hospitals. You've got to take your time and do your restructuring right." Instead the government is just using the bulldozer, moving quickly, drastically, not looking at the consequences of their actions.

The intimidation factor is out there. District health councils, local commissions, even hospital boards are afraid of the government. They think if they keep quiet, somehow they will avoid the bullet that's being fired. When the commission report comes down, of course those who have dodged the bullet are either going to be supportive or very silent of that recommendation because they dodged the bullet.

When you have all these hospitals closing, when you have hospital workers being fired left and right, when you have nurses who are now out of the hospitals, you have a lower standard of care, not because the people who are there don't care; they do. You don't have the people any more. That's why in Peterborough you had them stacked up in the hallways. Yesterday an individual passed away very tragically in a hallway. In all the hospitals they're lined up in the hallways for beds. The emergency services are backed up.

You people want to take more away. I don't understand it. I can understand some of your other initiatives, but if there's one thing that unites people of all political affiliations, of all backgrounds, it's good quality health care. Instead what you're moving to is an American system, a two-tier system. That is what is going to develop in this particular case.

I hope the members of this assembly will support the resolution by the member for Renfrew North and I hope



the government will reconsider its ill-advised position on hospital closings.

**Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South):** I stand today as the representative of the riding of Cochrane South to report back to this House, especially to the government on the other side, that there seems to be quite a bit of discrepancy between what was said in the last election in the Common Sense Revolution and what is happening now, and further and more important, between what was said by the then leader of the third party and the now Premier of the province.

I think it's good that every now and then we turn back to the Common Sense Revolution to make sure that as members of this Legislature we keep the government accountable to its promises. I remember that particular document and I remember promises in the last election. One of the promises made by the Tories in the last election read something like this: "We will not cut health care spending. It's far too important, and frankly, as we get older, we're all going to need it more and more. Under this plan, health care spending will be guaranteed."

I'm here to tell you that we've lost health care dollars in Cochrane South; we've lost health care dollars in Cochrane North. We are seeing amounts of money being withdrawn out of our hospitals this year, over \$1 million out of the Timmins and District Hospital. That means the good citizens of the city of Timmins and the people within the district, because we have a district hospital, have that many fewer services to rely on from the Timmins and District Hospital.

What's worse is that south of us, 300 miles down Highway 144, lies the community of Sudbury, which is a very important regional health care centre for north-eastern Ontario. When I call the three hospitals down there and others in the health care field, I find there have been cuts to health care budgets in the city of Sudbury. What that means to the citizens of northeastern Ontario and particularly to the citizens of Cochrane South is that we now have to wait longer and longer on waiting lists to be admitted to places like Sudbury Memorial for cardiac surgery and Laurentian for cancer treatment.

I turn back to the Common Sense Revolution. I want to show it. I want people to remember what the government, the then third party, said during the election and what they are doing now, because they like to pride themselves in being a party which sticks to its word and follows like the gospel the words it spoke in the last election. I want to remind members that they talked about a couple of things here, specifically in the Common Sense Revolution, "For many who need care" — I'll read it from the beginning. It talks about patient-based budgeting and about waiting lists and how it's a terrible thing that patients are having to wait for services. It goes on to say:

"For many who need care, this should mean an end to rationing and waiting lists. The fact that cancer patients can be trapped on waiting lists for months is a crime. The fact that pregnant women can't get epidurals is a scandal. The fact that people needing kidney dialysis have to wait in line is unacceptable."

It goes on to talk about how the government is going to put an end to those waiting lists and make sure that

people are going to get into those much-needed services almost immediately.

I recognize that you can't do it immediately, but certainly the government, the third party, in the last election promised that it would lower waiting lists for cardiac surgery and for cancer treatment. I raised cases in this House where people have been waiting for eight months, nine months to get into Sudbury Memorial for cardiac surgery. I raised the case where a woman literally had to threaten to commit suicide to get into the Sudbury Memorial for valve replacement. I've been called by others within the community of Timmins now waiting for valve surgery who can't now get in themselves and wonder: "Am I going to be able to get in in time? Do I have to live in fear because this government is cutting health care budgets?"

I thought that in the last election the Tories were quite clear. I thought they said that if they stood for anything other than fiscal conservatism, they had a belief in our health care system. They said they would maintain hospitals and maintain those budgets.

It is not happening. The government has gone against what it said in the Common Sense Revolution. They have cut health care dollars, something they said they would not do. They're not reinvesting whatever dollars they're cutting back into the communities. As the member for Nickel Belt said, that's something we had committed to as a government. We said that wherever we restructure within the hospital system, those dollars would be re-invested directly back into the communities from which the dollars came. This government is taking money out of health care and putting it into the coffers of Ernie Eves so he can afford to pay for his tax cut and give people who have the most amount of money the biggest of tax breaks.

1050

The biggest promise that — you know, you don't even hear about this one any more. That really strikes me because I thought the Tories were on to something in that last election when they talked about the fair share health care levy. How many Conservatives remember that one, where the Conservative government, then the third party, said that if the Tories were elected they would give Ontario citizens a 30% tax break, but in order to make it fair they would put in a health care levy for those income earners with a wage of over \$50,000 per year? Where is that? I don't see that happening. No, it's not happening. What you're doing is giving people a tax cut and we're not getting anything back into the health care system in return.

They talked in the Common Sense Revolution about how that was going to result in \$400 million being brought back into the coffers of the province of Ontario to offset some of their tax cut. Well, it ain't happening to the degree that the government said it was going to happen; in fact, they're falling far short of the mark. For a government that prides itself on holding itself to its promises and doing what it says, it turns out in health care, as in many other areas, the government is actually going in the opposite direction and breaking those promises.



I see on committees, as groups come to present to the government on various bills, there are many other people who are starting to recognize this. The Canadian Taxpayers Federation is starting to recognize that the government broke its promise when it came to what it would do around municipal downsizing and what it was going to do with municipal government. We're seeing Tory members of the past come to committees and speak out against this government. I say to those watching, it's important that you come in and tell your story, because it does have an effect.

The last thing I'd like to say in the last two minutes I've got is that it is unbelievable in this House during question period when we listen to the answers of cabinet ministers. There was a question in this House this week some time, or late last week, where a question was asked on the part of the opposition to the Minister of Health around hospital closures. The minister stood at his bench in this House and said, "We have not closed any hospitals in the province of Ontario and neither do we plan to close any hospitals." I sit here and I say, what planet are these people living on? Are they living in the province of Ontario or do they shuttle out of Ontario at night, whenever they're finished work here at Queen's Park, and go and live somewhere in the Cayman Islands?

I go around the province and I see hospital closures happening at a fairly alarming rate. In the community of Timmins, specifically South Porcupine, as a result of the decisions of this government to reduce funding to hospitals, the Porcupine Continuing Care Centre, which is one of the hospitals in Timmins, was shut down. The people in South Porcupine are still reeling from the effects of what that means to that part of the community.

So when I listen to the Minister of Health across the way stand in this House and say, "We're not going to shut any hospitals down, and neither have we," I sit here in disbelief. I know that I couldn't say something unparliamentary, but I'll tell you, I'm awful tempted, because when the citizens of South Porcupine talk to me on weekends and when I'm in the community on other days, they always remind me about what happened to South Porcupine, and I say it was a direct result of what this government did. The minister has a lot of nerve to stand in this House saying, "I've never closed a hospital and neither will I," because I can give you a list that's not very proud for the Conservatives.

**Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland):** I'm certainly very pleased to be able to address the resolution put forward by the member for Renfrew North. Certainly hospital and health care restructuring is a topic that's very important to everyone here in the province of Ontario. I found it quite interesting, in some of the polling that was carried out by the federal government recently prior to its budget coming out, that the top two issues were health care and education. That should come as no surprise to us, but both of these two happen to be within the provincial jurisdiction, so the information really wasn't of too much use to them.

Health care systems across Canada are indeed changing, and here in Ontario we have been lagging behind the pack for almost a decade. Under the two former governments health care issues were allowed to slide. Even as

health care providers were moving forward with innovative medical solutions, new technologies and shorter hospital stays, government bureaucracy and its attachment to bricks and mortar were indeed holding them back.

The member for Renfrew North should realize that the closure of beds started with the Liberal government when some 1,200 beds were closed, followed by the NDP with another 8,800-plus beds, so we're now well over 10,000 beds that have been closed by those two governments. That's equivalent to more than 33 mid-sized hospitals. But did they close any hospitals? No. Instead of putting money directly into patient care, hospitals were forced to put it into administration, operating empty rooms where the money was doing the least good.

Our government has recognized that that was the wrong approach and as a result hospital restructuring is urgently needed. We need to improve efficiency, eliminate waste and put health care dollars back where they're needed most: caring for patients. We're also committed to ensuring that quality patient care continues to be available to all Ontarians.

That is why the Health Services Restructuring Commission was set up in early January 1996. It is charged with moving the Ontario hospital system from one with high administrative costs and needless infrastructure to one that is focused on providing front-line patient services in a continuum of quality care. If in the course of its mandate the commission finds it beneficial to close redundant hospitals in Ontario, then it has the power to do that.

I point this out only because the member's resolution states that the government is closing hospitals and threatening patient access to care. I respectfully submit that the resolution is wrong on both counts. While the commission keeps the minister informed of its activities, it operates at arm's length from the government. That is as it should be.

I'd also like to point out that we're doing more than either of the two previous governments to improve the health care system in the province. We're finding efficiencies across the system, eliminating waste and re-investing in front-line medicine. That's what is important in this discussion here today and I think it needs to be emphasized.

Why, in the member's own area of eastern Ontario we've reinvested some \$1.6 million in expanded mental health care programs alone. That's just part of the \$23.5-million reinvestment program provided under the community investment fund established by this government. I'd also point out that home care in eastern Ontario has increased by approximately \$15 million from two years ago to now.

That is just the tip of the iceberg. In December 1995, we provided some \$390,000 base funding in the Ottawa Civic Hospital for expanded cardiac surgery, and in May last year the Royal Ottawa Hospital rehabilitation centre received \$1.1 million to improve rehab services in Ottawa. They're just some of the examples from the member's own area.

Across Ontario, we've reinvested millions more, starting with \$170 million in long-term community care.



That of course is another area of concern in this resolution before us today.

We've announced \$14 million in growth funding for northern Ontario hospitals this year. Then there's the \$45 million we're reinvesting in community programs to attract doctors to underserved areas, the \$7.1 million for long-term-care capital projects, the \$45 million for the Trillium drug plan expansion for 140,000 more Ontarians and the \$15.5 million for paramedical training programs.

The list goes on and on, for a \$683-million total reinvestment to date. All of these reinvestments point to a health care system that is getting better, not one that is threatening patient care. I believe we're now on the leading edge of health care reform in this country, redefining just what it means to be responsive and responsible.

That is what this restructuring exercise is all about. We're moving from being a passive payor to an active manager of Ontario's health care system. We're building an integrated health care system based on medical advances and community care, and we're doing everything possible to reverse the downward slide that began under the previous two governments. Our aim is quality health care, and changes now under way will lead to a seamless and accountable health care system for all Ontarians.

I would point out that the member for Renfrew North and the member for Nickel Belt did not offer any alternative suggestions. They seem to be still in the same old mode of, "Let's just spend and tax and borrow." That status quo doesn't work. We were looking for some alternative suggestions from you, but all you had was the status quo, and that just doesn't fly any more. Maybe the member for Renfrew North could turn to our Liberal friends in Ottawa and ask where did the \$2.1 billion go in transfer payments that they cut off to the province of Ontario.

**The Acting Speaker:** The member's time has expired. The member for Renfrew North.

1100

**Mr Conway:** I say to the member for Northumberland, how dare you make some of those assertions? Let me just tell you: In my county of Renfrew, looking at the government's own data before the cuts, before any of these cuts, before you took \$14 million out of the Pembroke hospital centre and before you slammed the door shut on the century-old Civic Hospital and before you took \$1.6 million out of the budgets of the Arnprior, Renfrew, Deep River and Barry's Bay hospitals, let me tell you what your own government data say about Renfrew county.

Looking at key indicators in terms of per capita health expenditure, before any of this, Renfrew county is at 80% of the provincial average. On hospital and related facilities, before any of the recent cuts, Renfrew county is at about 83% of the provincial average. On OHIP expenditures, we are at about 70% of the provincial average. On mental health services, before any of these cuts, according to your own data, we are at about 40% of the provincial average. On key indicators, before any of the cuts, we are well below the provincial average.

How dare you tell the old people of Pembroke and area that they should just take it as part of some kind of seamless new web that you're going to weave. I just find that extraordinary. You are right, some of you over there,

to say that hospitals weren't closed to any great extent in the period from 1976 through to 1992. Do you know why? Because when Frank Miller tried to do it in the early 1970s, with the best of intentions and all kinds of fancy data, he botched it and we had messes in Toronto and in the western peninsula, in communities like Huron and Bruce — botched it big time.

No government of whatever stripe could ever go back to those communities and try to undo those mistakes. I simply ask for the government to stop, look and listen, and particularly to listen to the needs of rural and northern Ontario which are not being recognized in this current madness based on these gossamer criteria that you've developed someplace.

**Mr John R. Baird (Nepean):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would like to ask for unanimous consent to amend the resolution, adding after the first paragraph, "We demand that the Chrétien government immediately stop its multibillion dollar cuts to health care and that fiscal savings derived from hospital restructuring should come from the" —

**The Acting Speaker:** Order. The member for Nepean, order. That is not a point of order.

## GASOLINE PRICES

**Mr E.J. Douglas Rollins (Quinte):** I move private member's notice of motion number 66:

That, in the opinion of this House, the government of Ontario should urge the government of Canada to ensure that the powers of the federal Competition Act are exercised to their fullest in eliminating anti-competitive practices in the retail gasoline marketplace and that the competition bureau place the highest priority possible on investigations that may affect the survival of small, independent gasoline retailers in the marketplace.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson):** The member for Quinte has 10 minutes.

**Mr Rollins:** In my opinion, a fair and competitive marketplace is essential to ensure that Ontario customers have the right to choose where they purchase gasoline, at the best service and at the best price.

The retail gasoline marketplace involves small independent suppliers as well as outlets representing large oil companies, many of which can exert significant influence over the retail price of their own outlets and those of independent retailers. Price rivalry is a major factor in ensuring that consumers have true purchasing power and the presence of viable independent retailers in the marketplace is important in ensuring price rivalry and healthy competition.

Consumers and small retailers in Ontario and other parts of Canada are concerned that predatory pricing practices may be exercised by some large suppliers, such as artificially depressing a retail price temporarily to drive down price and small retailers out of business. Under the federal Competition Act, the competition bureau and Industry Canada have a clear national responsibility to investigate uncompetitive practices, including abuse of dominant position in the marketplace, price-fixing and other activities adversely affecting competition and consumers.



I do not propose that the government should set gasoline prices. However, I believe that government should follow through on the practices and make sure that the independents have the opportunity to buy petroleum product at the same price as the other people who are buying from large companies that are in the same competition market.

A little bit of background about Doug Rollins: I started with Shell Oil back in 1962. I'm one of the first persons to have driven a pup truck in Ontario. It was in 1963 or 1964 that this Legislature passed legislation to allow vehicles of over 47 feet in length. Shell had bought a truck from British Columbia and parked it at the Lakehead. It was the first pup truck. When that legislation was passed and became law, they put the licence plates in my suitcase, flew me up to the Lakehead, and I brought back that truck. That was the very first one to my knowledge that was driven in the province of Ontario, particularly with licence plates on it.

*Interjections.*

**Mr Rollins:** Well, there are some farm wagons running around with the same practical thing.

After working for Shell for five years, I took over a service station, and as of May 15 of this year I will have been in that station for 30 years.

In my city of Belleville, when I opened a service station, there were 65 small outlets in Belleville. Today there are 15. Of those 65 outlets that we had in the city of Belleville, each one of them had one or two mechanics; each one of them had one or two and maybe three part-time people after school, on weekends and nights.

With the institution of allowing the large companies to come in and use their dealers at a different rate and in a different way than the operators that paid the rent, with the deal with them, it was free enterprise, but the big oil companies pushed down hard on the independents. So at the present time you're down to 15 or 16 outlets and the only major competition is the large corporate giants in the oil industry. We know there are four of them and we know there are lots of regulations they have to meet. They have to meet the regulations of supply and security and things of that nature.

But one of the biggest factors in the oil business and the gasoline business today is that the price of the product for the independent is paid for when a load of gas comes to his or her place of business. The problem is, with the major oil companies, when they bring that product to their suppliers, we've got to have some people who want to be able to sell that product the next day that oil company bills that station for what the product costs them. It puts those customers who have to pay for that load of gas when it comes to their place at a very great disadvantage. They cannot compete. There's a margin of profit in there.

I know the oil companies stand there and say they are certainly good corporate citizens, which in most cases they are, but the biggest thing they want to do is to make sure they have the biggest part of the supply. If they can crowd out another one — in the last three years they've closed out over 1,500 independent stations in Canada. Has that done away with a lot of jobs? I think it has certainly done away with an awful pile of jobs.

The Bureau of Competition Policy, if they would look at the business properly, adjust it properly and go into how the dollars — we don't need to change the regulations. They're already there. All we want to do is make sure that those regulations are adhered to. Is it right that a person from Sarnia, Ontario, where most of the gas is produced through the refineries, should be paying 61.9 cents a litre for gasoline, yet here in Toronto or in other places they are paying 53 or 54 cents? I don't think so. I think we should have the price of gasoline very competitive across the whole. I don't think as a government we need to regulate the price, but we need to regulate the selling practice, because the selling practice is what needs to be looked after.

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**Mr Floyd Laughren (Nickel Belt):** Get a wishing wand.

**Mr Rollins:** No, we won't need one of those.

We've got about four different operations that the companies work under. The operations they work under are company-owned and -operated and they control the price. You've got your commission retailer, where the company guarantees the price of that product, so when I am a commissioned operator or retailer, I am guaranteed by Imperial, Shell, Sunoco, Ultramar, one of the biggies, that regardless of what the price is, I am given my guaranteed margin. I don't have to pay for the load of gas when it comes in, there are no taxes collected. You and I do not see the tax cheque until after the next day, when the product is sold. I feel that's a very unfair practical way of putting small independent businesses very much at a disadvantage. We've got to look after them.

You've got your leased operators. The leased operators are people who lease from the oil company, they pay their rent, they pay their head costs on to it, the load of gas comes, they pay for it. They are close to being in the same position as the independent. But when the unbranded dealer's truck goes to the refinery, the gasoline is paid for at that time. Just remember that the gasoline is a byproduct of the refinery business. The oil companies won't always offer you that.

But how many times have you driven this province of ours and seen the price of diesel change? It changes very little. How much are the heating oil changes over the course of a year? It changes very little. But it upsets me, it upsets a lot of people when you see fluctuations in the price of gasoline of six or seven cents in a matter of a few hours, yet they're allowed to do that when they have no dollar cost tied into it.

Years ago, we used to have consignment. The government, in its wisdom, took away consignment. They said that was illegal. Now we have competition where the seller does not own the gasoline until the day after he sells it. So the day after he sells it, he runs down to the bank, puts the money in the bank and puts the taxes up. The taxes are collected for Ottawa, the taxes that the oil company pays, which is the second-biggest tax collector that the government has — second only to tobacco. They put together some \$9 billion in tax revenues.

In the share of market today Shell has approximately 13% of the market; Esso, 20%; Petro Canada, 20%;



Sunoco, about 9%; Ultramar, 2%. Independents in 1993 had 29% of the market. Today they're down to 26%. They have rack pricing in Toronto and they tell you that rack pricing is the ultimate in being able to control the price. I want to inform you that Imperial Oil told me it has 113 different pricing zones in Ontario. If you think this kind of legislation can help to nullify those 113 different pricing zones and make this market a little bit fairer, I ask for your support.

**Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin):** I am privileged and feel it an honour to get up to support the member for Quinte's resolution. I thought that perhaps the Tories had forgotten their roots. At least we have one who understands that the small business person in Ontario is important and is important to competition. I'm certainly glad we have at least one Tory who doesn't believe that bigger is better. This government believes that bigger government, bigger companies, bigger banks and bigger oil companies are better. I'm certainly happy to see that the member is putting this resolution before us.

I have in my constituency a large number of independent gas dealers. I think of Charlie at Charlie's Shell in Gore Bay or Danny Forest in Gore Bay, Dave Montgomery in Kagawong, Bob Melis in Spanish. They tell me the same things the member's telling me today. They understand that they are always at the whim of the big oil company. The big oil company controls their destiny; it controls their profits; it controls what the consumer price will be.

They have great difficulty but, more than that, my constituents cannot understand why we pay prices that are absolutely outrageous. We pay prices on Manitoulin Island and in Elliott Lake along the North Shore that are in no way competitive with the rest of the province. The fact is, in my constituency driving is not a choice. You cannot get on the TTC; you cannot take public transportation. What you have to do if you want to get from A to B, if you want to get to the hospital, if you want to get to the doctor's appointment, if you want to go to the grocery store, you have to get in your car and you have to use gasoline. That means we have to do something. We've talked about this for 30 years in this province, about having real competition in the gasoline retail business.

The only problem I have with the resolution that the member's putting forward — and I agree we should ask the federal competition bureau to do something about this, investigate and see that things are fair, but there is something we can do. There is something his own government can do — and it's been done. It's been done in Quebec and in New Brunswick and in 22 states in the home of free enterprise, the land of the free and the brave. Some 22 states have legislation which prohibits some of the practices that he is talking about here today.

Why don't you go talk to Dave Tsubouchi and Norm Sterling, the Minister of Energy and the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations? They can do something; they can do something right now. We don't have to wait for a bunch of bureaucrats in the federal government to run around and have an investigation which will decide all is well and good, I'm sure. You can do something. I'm asking on behalf of those independents in my

constituency, some of whom can tell you some very interesting stories about what big oil companies can do to them — and when they do it to them, they do it to the consumer because choice in the marketplace is reduced.

I'm just suggesting to the member what he should do. What would be far more productive is to ask the minister. Maybe he could get up this afternoon and ask the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations if he will move today to do what 22 states and two provinces in this nation have done and bring in laws that protect the independent from the kind of price manipulation and unfair competition practices that have put people in my constituency out of business.

It means you don't have choice. It means higher prices. It means all those things. So I ask the member — this is nice but the real answer lies right here in the Legislature of Ontario — to stand up and ask the minister this afternoon if he'll get on with his job.

**Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold):** I was happy to see this on the order paper for the two hours we spend on Thursday morning when private members bring up issues. I appreciate the member has some extensive personal background in the industry and brings some of those insights to it, but this isn't novel. Look at the history of what's happened.

The member may well understand small business because he's been involved in it, but I'm convinced this government doesn't understand small business. This government, like its friend Catherine Swift, who I'm convinced from time to time isn't that swift, believes that small business is 100 or so non-union, low-wage, preferably minimum-wage employees. Small business is exactly what the member is talking about: small, owner-operated businesses where one works with one's partner, and if their kids are old enough, their kids get brought into the business — the sort of culture I grew up in. I know what he's speaking of.

Look what the oil companies have been doing over the course of the last 20, 25 and even 30 years. Look how they sold the gas bar. They promised lower prices, didn't they? In the course of selling us on the gas bar, they put out of business dozens and dozens, in every given community, of small service stations that provided service, that provided repair service for people who had an emergency, and that were able to support their families and send their kids to college and university, which is going to become increasingly difficult now as this government raises college and university tuitions and as small business people are increasingly under attack.

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The oil industry is surely predatory. I have no quarrel with the member in describing it as such. Among its prey have been the small independent operators. I tell you, and the member speaks of this, the small lease operators are as much a victim of the predatory nature of these big oil companies as are the independents. I think one of the things we can do, and I try to do it as often as I can, is to make sure I buy gas from family-operated service stations, sometimes independents, people like Chris Shoemaker's Welland gas station over at Thorold Road in Welland, sometimes admittedly from the chains, like Fralick over on Niagara Street, but again owner-operated.



They've got the service bays and they're the sort of people who, if you need an emergency repair or some quick assistance, are as likely to do it no charge as not because they're going to give you what Shell and the others aren't.

Look at the insurance industry. Talk about a predatory industry. Talk about an industry that's going to gang up on its own brokers, because they're putting the boots to brokers just as the big gasoline industries are putting the boots to their own lease operators and to the independents and again to consumers. We've got classrooms of young people up here who are going to ill afford to be able to drive a car at their age because they simply can't afford the insurance premiums because we've got an insurance industry in this province that can run roughshod over drivers, especially young drivers, and gouge them and grind them to the point where they're inevitably going to be forced to pay more in insurance than they're going to pay for that first car.

This government has failed to rein in the insurance industry and is allowing the insurance industry to continue to run roughshod over drivers in this province. The insurance industry is just like the oil industry: short arms and deep pockets. If they can pick your pocket, they will, quick as a boo, in a New York minute. Look at the other victims of this predatory corporate, multinational fuel industry, the gasoline and oil industry. Look at the other victims.

I appreciate the member's courage in bringing forward this resolution because, by and large, the front benches of this government have a special affinity for big, multinational corporations. They're the ones who hired Andersen Consulting out of Chicago, which stands to earn up to \$180 million. This government would rather work with an American-based multinational and pay them \$180 million to attack the poorest here in Ontario than look to made-in-Ontario expertise. These guys don't understand that it's Ontarians who need jobs and that there's a whole lot of expertise available in the province that could fix their computer system, if indeed it needs fixing, in the Ministry of Community and Social Services. They didn't have to go to Chicago to make a deal. Some slick deal: a firm that just had to pay out \$82 million in a settlement for their negligent audits in the savings and loan industry, which cost American taxpayers billions of dollars. These are the kinds of corporate multinationals that this government likes to do business with.

I applaud this member's courage in taking on the same multinationals that his front benches want to get in bed with. It demonstrates some insight. It demonstrates some compassion for consumers, because the other victims of these oil companies are the consumers. Just as the member talks about these big oil companies being able to artificially lower their prices to put the boots to the independent operator to put him or her out of business so they can take over the whole industry, we've also seen the price increases on weekends, especially long weekends, vacation weekends, when that same oil industry, I am convinced, and so are thousands and thousands of drivers and consumers, will artificially escalate its prices to gouge people who want to use the roadways when they have the leisure time to do so.

So I'm going to support Mr Rollins's proposition and I'm going to applaud his courage for breaking with his government and their pattern of crawling into bed with the largest and the biggest and the most vicious of multinational corporations. Now, Mr Rollins may find himself in the position where he's never invited in the cabinet door, other than perhaps to pick up a file from an aide or so, and I think that's okay, because Mr Rollins is sticking up for the little guy, something that his government is disinclined to do.

I say to Mr Rollins, God bless you, sir. I say on behalf of the independent operators, and most of them are members — they have an organization, the Independent Retail Gasoline Marketers Association. No doubt Mr Rollins has been in touch with them. No doubt he knows those people well. These are the little people. These are the real small business people, not Catherine Swift's small business people: as I say, 100 non-union employees making minimum wage and big profits for their bosses, the sort of people Frank Stronach would want to force to work for him, the kind of people Frank Stronach would exploit and abuse when they try to organize a labour union, a trade union, within their workplace.

These little independent retail gasoline marketers, they're real small business. I know who they are; the folks in Welland-Thorold know who they are. I say we should be encouraging people to shop at owner-operated stores and business places and we should be encouraging people to buy the gasoline and use the services of owner-operated service stations.

**Mr Jim Flaherty (Durham Centre):** I'm pleased to rise and address the resolution proposed by my colleague the honourable member for Quinte. I support the resolution. A fair, competitive marketplace is essential in ensuring that Ontario consumers have the right to buy gas where they want based on price and service. A fair, competitive marketplace is also the best way of ensuring that small independent gasoline retailers continue to play an important role in the marketplace, ensuring healthy competition, including price competition.

The plain fact is that the more competition there is, the better the price for the consumer. This government certainly supports these priorities, but it is Ottawa's responsibility constitutionally, the federal government's responsibility, not Ontario's, to ensure a competitive market under the federal Competition Act. In response to the resolution before us, Ontario wants Ottawa to exercise those powers.

Gasoline prices are much like other commodities; they are best set in a competitive marketplace, drastically reducing the potential for so-called predatory pricing. Under the Competition Act, the federal government has the power to protect consumers from anti-competitive pricing in the retail gasoline business. Our government has written to the federal industry minister about this matter. When he was the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations, the Honourable Norm Sterling clearly expressed in writing our province's concern about gasoline prices in this province.

We are aware that several other provinces have expressed similar concerns. I understand the government of Quebec has introduced legislation establishing a



formula for minimum pricing of gasoline and diesel fuel. That legislation does not give the government the power to set prices. Quebec's legislation was a response to gasoline price wars in Montreal and elsewhere between August and October 1996. Independent retailers complained that large retailers were selling gasoline below cost and using that practice to try to force independent retailers out of business.

What we truly need is for Ottawa to foster this kind of competition in every part of this country. The resolution we are considering today asks Ottawa to move on this important issue in the interests of all Canadians. Anti-competitive practices such as those which this resolution asks Ottawa to redress do not help anyone. They are bad for the consumer, they are bad for the marketplace, and ultimately they are bad for business.

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Our government is committed to providing consumers with a fair, competitive marketplace, whether it's at the gas pump or at the front door of their homes. We're not asking Ottawa to regulate gasoline prices. That would not be in the interests of the consumer or the industry and it would be very much at odds with our own commitment to promoting the free market system.

With this resolution the federal government is being told to do two things: first of all, to ensure fair pricing in the retail gasoline market; and secondly, to help keep viable, independent retailers in business as a way of ensuring competition. It is important to do both. They are connected. One cannot occur effectively without the other.

May I congratulate the honourable member for Quinte on his initiative in bringing this important resolution before the House. I support his resolution.

**Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines):** This is a significant issue which is being dealt with today. We in the opposition have directed many questions to the Minister of Energy and the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations regarding this matter. Each time, they bail out and refuse to take any significant action against the gouging of consumers by the major gas companies in this province, the oil companies which produce gasoline for automobiles.

I would have a lot more sympathy for this resolution if it were directed to the provincial government, but the government members are past masters at pointing the finger somewhere else. The solution lies with the provincial government. I will support the resolution and I have no reason to doubt my friend from Quinte's sincerity in this. He's spoken out on this in the House, he's voted for opposition initiatives in this regard, and I'll be supporting his resolution. I simply want to say to his colleagues, particularly the cabinet members, that they should be taking initiatives themselves.

We have in at least two provinces and 22 states a law which says that the major oil companies can't undercut the independents. In other words, they can't sell gasoline for 54 cents a litre to an independent and then turn around and sell it in the same community for 52 cents to undercut them and put them out of business, because while there's a short-term benefit to the consumer in that regard, once you wipe out the competition, once you

wipe out the independents, then you can be sure prices will rise considerably. That's what the member's trying to get at: keeping the independents in business.

This is, however, contrary to the thrust of this government in terms of deregulation. I see my good friend Frank Sheehan, the member for Lincoln, sitting with the powers that be behind the Speaker's seat. He came out with a report which called for all kinds of deregulation, and I don't know whether he's going to be able to support this now. I'll be watching that carefully. So this flies in the face of the general thrust of this government.

All of us can't stand the up and down to the prices. You watch them change at one gas station and they're up and down, and the only difference is about a tenth of a cent per litre or a couple of tenths of a cent per litre, so there's no real competition there and that annoys all of us who are consumers.

We can't see these independents wiped out, because they try to keep the big companies honest. I would have thought that with a government that has so many friends in big business, the Premier would have gone to the major oil companies and said: "This is unfair practice. You know I'm your friend, so why don't you do something to protect the consumers and the independents in this province?"

You have those contacts. Large as life, they troop out to support you on so many occasions.

The other problem my friend the member for Quinte also notes, as I do, is the long weekends, where more often than not up goes the gas price. It's now way up around 60 cents; no more do you see under 50 cents a litre any more.

There was another initiative before the House, the bill by the member for Ottawa West, Bob Chiarelli, which, if the government wanted to proceed with that bill, would address some of this problem, but they usually bury it somewhere so that it doesn't proceed any more.

I've heard this provincial government say it wants more power for the provinces. Well, here's a good opportunity. All the province has to do is pass a law which says that the major oil companies cannot undercut the independents. That would be a major initiative. I'll tell you, it would get three readings in one day in this House if that law were brought forward. I'd be here to support it strongly; I'd recommend it to my colleagues.

I say to my friend from Quinte, I am pleased to see this matter addressed. I know it's a matter of great interest to him. He has as much expertise in this field as anybody I know and has shared that with many of us who've had concerns about this matter.

I'll support this resolution and I'll also support the provincial government taking immediate action within its jurisdiction to save independents in this province.

**The Acting Speaker:** Further debate? The Chair recognizes the member for Nickel Belt.

**Mr Floyd Laughren (Nickel Belt):** I shall be supporting the member for Quinte's resolution because I do think there is a problem.

I agree with the member for St Catharines that it is a bit wearisome to have Tory members standing up in private members' hour and directing their initiatives towards the federal government when they have a



government of their own here that could be doing some things. I find that passing strange, but nevertheless I am going to support this.

I am concerned, though, about the member for Quinte. Despite what the member for Durham Centre says, that this is not a bill that regulates, I am concerned that the member for Quinte, a long-standing member of the Conservative community in this province, would launch this vicious attack on free enterprise in Ontario. I find this appalling. Here we have a party; you think you know what they stand for; you think they stand for free enterprise and deregulation. And then the member for Quinte stands in his place and says, "We've got to regulate the oil companies so that they stop beating out the competition." My goodness, Mr Speaker, I must tell you that I really am shocked and appalled that this member would launch this kind of attack on his friends in the free enterprise system.

I can only imagine that the phone calls from the Fraser Institute and the National Citizens' Coalition will be pouring into this member's office this very day. If they're not, they're not doing their job. I hope they understand how subversive this resolution is towards the free enterprise system. You could bring the free enterprise system to its knees if you were to launch this kind of program to stop people from selling at a price they think will attract business, because that's what you're doing.

I support you. I hasten to add that I support the member for Quinte because I don't like the pricing practices of the oil companies either.

I have a community in my own constituency, a little community called Chappleau, where I've seen the price of gasoline at over 70 cents a litre, more than 10 cents a litre above just a few miles away; well, 100 miles away. In that part of the country that's not a long way. Ten cents a litre before we went to metric would be over 40 cents a gallon more. Do you think the consumers would have put up with a 40-cent difference in gasoline? They live with a 10-cent litre difference because they have no choice, but they're angry. They're always angry. So I hate the pricing practices of the oil companies myself.

Nobody will ever believe that it has to do with transportation costs — absolutely not. That's been proven. There were studies done in this province that showed that kind of difference has absolutely nothing to do with delivery costs; it has only to do with what the market will bear, how much the market will pay because there is not enough competition in that community. Everybody understands that.

But I must say, at the end of the day, even though I'm going to support this, I really don't know about Tories any more. I was absolutely convinced that this bunch of neo-conservative reformers had their act together when it came to the marketplace and that they would never intervene in the marketplace this way. This is intervention on a massive scale. I can't imagine what the oil companies would do if you were to pass this and convince the federal government that it should do this. Can you imagine the chaos in the marketplace, in the oil patch? I can just imagine.

At the end of the day, I am going to support this resolution, but I must say that my faith in the ideology of

the Tory party has been shaken to the core. I thought I knew who they were, where they came from, what they believed in, that they were at least consistent. Even though I am adamantly opposed to virtually everything you people stand for, at least I felt it was consistent.

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I sometimes had problems with my friends in the Liberal Party about consistency and where they stand on various issues, but I never before had that problem with the Tories. Now I must say I'm perplexed. I am going to have to go back to school and study what it means to be a Tory again, because I'm worried. Now this is just one private member's resolution. I appreciate that and I don't want to read too much into it. I don't want to say that this was drafted by Tom Long, because I don't believe Tom Long would draft this. I'll bet you that when Tom Long sees this, he goes on medication for a week, because I really believe he will be as shocked and appalled as I am with the inconsistency in what the Tory party now apparently stands for.

We'll see. Maybe the Tories will all vote against the member for Quinte. This is going to be a fascinating thing to watch. I hope that people are watching this debate very closely, not because I'm speaking but because of what the resolution by the member for Quinte says. It'll be interesting to see how many cabinet ministers support the member for Quinte on this resolution and how many of the Reform-minded members of the Tory Party, like the member for Nepean, will actually support the member for Quinte in his resolution.

If the Tories pass this resolution, you will have set in place a force that you may not be able to cope with, because you will have undermined very fundamentally the entire free enterprise system in this country. Therefore, I am going to support it. For that reason alone, I'm going to support it. I commend the member for Quinte for bringing this forward and I wish him well.

**Mr John O'Toole (Durham East):** I am pleased to rise today to speak on the private member's resolution from the member for Quinte, Doug Rollins, and also to listen to the comments made by, most recently, the member for Nickel Belt. I'd like anyone listening to the debate to recognize that there is an element of risk here when he's so wildly supportive of this. But I think if you look at what we're trying to attempt here, it is to look at the individual case before us. Each person who has put gas in the car realizes that there is a wild fluctuation in price, depending on if it is a long weekend or we're entering into the summer driving season. Why is it? Why is there such a wild fluctuation in price?

The background to the member's resolution this morning comes from a very sincere knowledge of the business he speaks of. Mr Rollins is, of course, well-known in his riding as being a long-time independent, a person who's operated in a competitive environment by his own will and his own fortitude.

I might add that there are other members in the House — the member for Peterborough, Gary Stewart, and his brothers are long-time members of the business community, but first started as independents in the fuel business, so in this caucus there's a lot of information on small business.



I think, in the research on this, the small business community is under siege and under threat in this particular environment. When you look at the recent statistics, the decline in the membership of the independent producers from some 22% to some 12%, there needs to be some action taken to ensure we have competition. It's a case of a David-and-Goliath kind of scenario.

We are still friends of small business and always will be. That's the very thrust of much of what we're doing. There were some comments made about Catherine Swift. I think they are the sole supporters. If you listen to the member for Nickel Belt, obviously there was no support from him for small business. That's what I heard him say.

Our government is clearly on record as in support of small business and competition. There are three key elements to this resolution, in my view: It's small business or the independent versus the multinational; second, it's competition versus monopoly; third, it's an appeal to Ottawa to exercise the authority it currently has, whether it comes to the federal Competition Act or the competition bureau's function.

As we approach the long weekend, as I said, each one of us has a vested interest in making sure there's fair pricing and competition. I compliment the honourable member for Quinte for standing up for small business and the consumers of Ontario.

I will be supporting this resolution. Thank you for allowing me to speak on it.

**Mr Sean G. Conway (Renfrew North):** I want to join the debate and say to my friend from Belleville that I will be pleased to support his resolution. Where I come from the name Rollins is synonymous with gasoline distribution, in north Hastings, Hastings and Renfrew. Clarke must have been a relative — that's right, he was a relative. So I've got a long association with the Rollins name in this business. I think he makes a very good point. There is no question that there are a lot of people out there who I represent who are extremely upset at what they see as manipulation in the marketplace.

There are a lot of small retailers who quite frankly don't believe there is any kind of marketplace and it is hard not to agree with them. I want to say to my friend from Belleville that we have known that big oil has behaved this way since the days of John D. Rockefeller. Why should we be surprised that it's any different today? Oh, yes, there's some kind of a regulatory framework and there is a different kind of mood out there, but big oil has just got one interest: maximizing big profits.

I find it interesting, as do my colleagues here, that it is the intent of this resolution that the federal competition branch should get more active. I have no problem with that at all. I'm waiting for the day, by the way, when my friends on the treasury bench or somebody in the government caucus brings forward a motion to encourage the federal competition branch to get more active with the Black press, but I suspect that's not going to happen, I say to my friend from Nickel Belt.

The provincial governments, like the state governments in the United States, have an opportunity, and I would argue as my friend from St Catharines and my colleague from Manitoulin did, we too have some responsibilities.

I have no difficulty in supporting the intention, because a lot of people, a lot of consumers and a lot of small retailers really have said to me in recent times, in places like Griffith and Chalk River and Barry's Bay that they feel they are getting manipulated, to use the polite phrase. They are, I think. I don't doubt for a moment they are.

They're not just angry, by the way, about big oil. They're pretty upset with the provincial government and its partnership with big oil. I'm sure my friend from Quinte hears what I hear. All of these little retailers up Highway 62, up Highway 41, out Highway 60 are not very happy, many of them, with the constant changes and pressures from the provincial government around retailing gasoline.

Every two or three years we seem to be telling them as a provincial government — Liberal, Tory and NDP — that they've got to dig up the tanks and spend \$10,000 or \$5,000 they don't have to meet some new standard that may not be necessary to meet their particular situation. All of us want a good environmental standard, but I'll tell you, if you're Gary Burchat running BB's Lunch Bar near Wilno, you're not very happy about the provincial government coming in every couple of years and saying, "Dig them up and spend \$5,000, \$6,000, \$7,000" to meet some new changed standard, notwithstanding the fact there is no evidence that there has been any problem; none whatsoever.

I was in the little hamlet of Griffith in the southwestern part of my constituency the other day and the owner of the Pineview Restaurant and Gas Bar was very upset because he was going to have to spend money he didn't have to meet a standard he just didn't understand on the basis of his situation. When the margins are as small as they are — nobody knows that better than the sponsor of this resolution — we as a provincial government have got to understand that our regulations are imposing real cost on these small independents.

I don't know whether anybody has mentioned it, but I was looking at some files earlier this morning. The market share of the independents in Ontario has dropped from something like 22% to 12% in just the last couple of years. There's a sense among these small players, these small retailers, that there is perhaps even an unintended collusion between big oil and big government, whether it's national or provincial, to squeeze these little people out. I want to say on behalf of the Gary Burchats and others, the Etmanskies, a good Shell retailer up there in Barry's Bay, that they want not just action from the federal competition bureau but they want action from the provincial Ministry of Consumer and Commercial Relations and others.

1150

I just want to say, in conclusion, it's good to see a Tory like my friend Rollins; it's good to know that the Harry Stevens tradition in Conservative politics has not died; that there are some small business people still in the Tory party who are not slavish acolytes like that Horatio Alger, like David Frum and his hard-put-upon friend Tom Long who just would have us all believe that, "Give us a pure, unadulterated marketplace and big oil and big banks and big corporate agriculture will provide a nirvana of social peace and economic prosperity."



**Mr Bill Grimmitt (Muskoka-Georgian Bay):** I should explain, for those who don't know, that my injury did not result from arm-twisting by the member for Quinte to support his resolution, although I will be supporting it today. Neither did it result from a visit by the big oil companies last night; it resulted from a hockey injury. I was warned that when I got into this business, I might get beaten up in the media but I didn't know I might get beaten up by the media.

However, I am happy to speak to this resolution today. I want to say how pleased I am to see that there seems to be general acceptance of the need for stronger action by the federal Competition Act people to make sure that a free marketplace exists.

I couldn't help but notice the amusing remarks from the member for Nickel Belt. He has had the opportunity over the time he's been here to develop quite a good sense of humour, and I know he's having some fun with our party on this particular resolution. I think it's still possible for a person who has been as schooled in economics as the member for Nickel Belt to go back to school, perhaps lose some of that school economics and pick up a little commonsense economics, which many members of the Tory party have from their own experience in small business.

While we've heard some disparaging remarks about how our party supports big business, most of the members of our party are very experienced in small business and have operated in a very small business way, and that is really the concern we all have in addressing this resolution.

In my riding of Muskoka-Georgian Bay there are numerous operators, some of them independents, but the majority of them are in a leasing situation with large oil companies. I've had the opportunity as a small-town lawyer to advise people who enter into agreements with large oil companies, and the size and density of the contracts the large oil companies use when they enter into a leasing situation has astounded me. It is difficult to determine exactly whether or not it is a leasing situation when you're going through the contracts.

It is certainly a worthwhile step to direct the federal government to pay attention to the particulars in the Competition Act and also to recall the early years when the Combines Investigation Act was first developed, very much in an attempt not to overregulate small business but to allow the marketplace to operate in a truly free way.

I take issue with some of the comments that were made by members who said that the provincial government would be free to enter this field and impose legislation. While there may be legislation in New Brunswick and Quebec which prevents or attempts to prevent the imposition of prices that are below the retail price in order to eliminate competitors, I think it's very questionable whether that legislation is enforceable. When you look at some of the legislation that has been interpreted by courts over the years under sections 91 and 92 of the British North America Act, in most cases, when the federal government is occupying the field, the provincial legislation is deemed to be ultra vires and has no effect.

I want to make it very clear from the outset that I am a believer in the marketplace and that I believe the

consumer is the greatest beneficiary of a free market, provided that marketplace is in fact free.

In my riding I've had the opportunity to talk to a number of constituents who are very concerned, like the member for St Catharines, about the continuous up-and-down character of gasoline prices. Some of the prices that have been used today are similar in my riding and it seems that the prices fluctuate wildly, especially on long weekends. For most of my constituents, it's a matter of great concern. They also, as the member for Renfrew North has said, feel manipulated. They feel like there is a force out there that is operating to control these prices. It's not a matter of the marketplace that is controlling the prices.

The number of operators in the independent category has been reducing over the years. I too had the opportunity to look up some information supplied by the association for independent operators and indeed the number is down in the 12% range now.

In the riding I represent, people absolutely are dependent on gasoline. Most of the people who visit Muskoka-Georgian Bay as tourists do so in automobiles, and the issue of gasoline prices is very significant. We do not have a large public transit system. It is a matter of free enterprise. You either have a car and drive around or you walk.

Quite simply, I think the resolution should be implemented and we should pressure the federal government to fully implement the Competition Act and make sure that all retail gasoline marketers are on a level playing field.

For many of us the fluctuating pump prices are a bittersweet situation. When these prices fluctuate wildly, they force smaller operators from the field and the consumers do not benefit with the lowest possible price.

The federal Competition Act bans certain kinds of activities in the market, and among those activities are collusion and price fixing and predatory pricing. It's predatory pricing that we're really fixing on in this resolution, pricing that's designed specifically with the purpose of driving a competitor out of business so that prices subsequently can be raised.

Under the act wholesale suppliers are not allowed to apply pressure to their dealers to maintain prices at a given level. That is something I think is worth looking into as well. Having represented many independent operators who were in leasing situations with large companies, it certainly seems to me that there is not a great deal of pricing freedom in that relationship.

These are the elements of the act which, when enforced to their fullest extent, provide a level playing field for retailers in the industry, and those are the elements which will ensure fair prices for Ontario and Canadian consumers. I'm pleased to support the resolution today.

**Mr Rollins:** I first of all want to thank everybody who has spoken in favour of it. I also want to thank the member for Nickel Belt for changing his lifestyle today, or giving a little bit of hope for it, because I think the way he expressed himself, that he might have to do something tonight after dark, I'm not sure what that is, but I hope that it is something a little bit different than he has in the past.



I also want to bring to your attention that when we have and allow companies to have 110-plus pricing zones in the province of Ontario, we are allowing those people to fluctuate those prices. I know a lot of people say that's not an easy solution, that won't solve all the problem. I haven't had anybody tell me personally that it won't help the problem if we at least price the product when it leaves the refinery, not allow the oil company to deliver the product with no bill of lading other than the weight and the load and then price it the day after it sells. That is not fair. It puts an awful lot of strain on the independents because the independent people have to pay the price when it arrives on their ground and goes in the ground and is pumped back out.

It's very easy for the majors and the person who's running on commission to not worry about the price. They are the individuals who want us to put the price down because they are paid strictly on volume. If the price is down and of course if I'm the lowest guy in town, I will get the biggest amount of traffic and I'll sell the most gas and I'll make the most money. That puts the pressure back on an independent sitting there. What is he supposed to do?

Quite often the independents and quite often a lot of the gas stations today, over the time when I started into it, have another business. They have a car-wash business, they have a small grocery store, they have a lunch bar and a few things like that. It's a lot of mom-and-pop operations out of the greater Metro Toronto area. It's out in the communities like Renfrew and my community of Quinte and Belleville, the outlying parts of Ontario.

Those places supply an awful lot of first-time jobs for people out of high school, their first job to go and help, and that's the kind of impact that we need to look at. Those people who have those small jobs — I know they're only part-time jobs, lots of them — at least have a chance, and today those chances are being missed.

I want to encourage the support — and by the sound of it I'm going to have it — that we can push on to Ottawa to make them take a look at it and make sure it's — they said they went and looked at it in 1994. I'll tell you one thing: If they would ask Doug Rollins to go with them when they go to take a look at it, I'll point out some of the places where they maybe should be looking and make the thing a little bit stronger and more supportive.

Once again, I thank all the members who have supported me in speaking for it.

**The Acting Speaker:** The time for private members' public business has expired.

I would like to take just a moment, if I could, to express some admiration for the deportment of the class in the west gallery. My compliments to the teachers and the class members.

#### HOSPITAL RESTRUCTURING

**The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson):** We will deal first with ballot item number 65. If there are any members who are against taking a vote on this at this time, would they please rise?

Is it the pleasure of the House that this motion carry?

All those in favour, please say "aye."  
All those opposed, please say "nay."  
In my opinion, the nays have it.  
The vote will be deferred.

#### GASOLINE PRICES

**The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson):** We will deal now with ballot item number 66, standing in the name of Mr Rollins. If there are any members who are opposed to taking a vote at this time, would they please rise.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?  
I declare it carried.

Call in the members; there will be a five-minute bell.  
*The division bells rang from 1203 to 1208.*

#### HOSPITAL RESTRUCTURING

**The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson):** Would the members please take their seats. Mr Conway has moved private member's notice of motion number 43.

All those in favour, please rise and remain standing.

##### Ayes

Bisson, Gilles	Grandmaître, Bernard	Martin, Tony
Bradley, James J.	Kennedy, Gerard	McLeod, Lyn
Brown, Michael A.	Kormos, Peter	Phillips, Gerry
Churley, Marilyn	Kwinter, Monte	Pupatello, Sandra
Conway, Sean G.	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Shea, Derwyn
Crozier, Bruce	Laughren, Floyd	Wildman, Bud
Gerretsen, John	Marchese, Rosario	

**The Acting Speaker:** All those opposed please rise and remain standing.

##### Nays

Arnott, Ted	Froese, Tom	Munro, Julia
Baird, John R.	Galt, Doug	O'Toole, John
Barrett, Toby	Grimmett, Bill	Preston, Peter
Brown, Jim	Guzzo, Garry J.	Rollins, E.J. Douglas
Carroll, Jack	Hardeman, Ernie	Ross, Lillian
Chudleigh, Ted	Hastings, John	Sheehan, Frank
Doyle, Ed	Johns, Helen	Skarica, Toni
Ecker, Janet	Johnson, Ron	Smith, Bruce
Flaherty, Jim	Jordan, W. Leo	Spina, Joseph
Ford, Douglas B.	Leadston, Gary L.	Vankoughnet, Bill
Fox, Gary	Martiniuk, Gerry	Wood, Bob

**Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers):** The ayes are 20; the nays are 33.

**The Acting Speaker:** I declare the motion lost.

It being after 12 of the clock, this chamber stands recessed until 1:30 o'clock this afternoon.

*The House recessed from 1210 to 1331.*

#### MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

##### AFFORDABLE HOUSING

**Mr Mario Sergio (Yorkview):** My statement today is addressed to the Minister of Housing. He consistently



keeps saying he does not believe the government should be involved in providing affordable housing, that he, including his government, should not be in the bricks-and-mortar business, as he calls it.

Minister, let me remind you that in Metro we have 33% of the non-profit housing and 45% of public housing. I also remind the minister that Metro has a huge, disproportionate number of seniors and needy people, urgently needing affordable housing. There is a long list of some 25,000 people with a waiting period of some six years. I wonder if you have forgotten about it or if it's an issue you would like to forget about.

Let me remind the minister that as the list of people gets longer, the waiting period gets wider. I'm talking of needy people. Let me just give you an example: In my own area I have a family of seven kids and two parents — that's nine people — living in a one-bedroom apartment, and the living conditions of that particular family are not very pleasant.

### PUBLIC LIBRARIES

**Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold):** The users, the patrons, the readers at the Welland Public Library, at the Thorold library, at the Pelham library, along with communities across this province and the people in those communities, as often as not seniors and young people who use their public libraries, are shocked and outraged at this government's abandonment of public libraries, at this government's refusal to recognize that public libraries in small-town and, yes, big-city Ontario form an important part of what makes a city a community and of what makes a city healthy for the people living in that community.

They're concerned, and rightly so, because this legislation from this government that doesn't give a tinker's dam about public libraries and a whole lot of other public institutions is going to destroy the equity of access across the province that had developed over the course of years with the provincial involvement in the maintenance of libraries.

They're concerned because the downloading that's been imposed, along with the abdication of this government's responsibility to assist in the funding of libraries, simply is going to mean that many of those libraries are going to shut down. Those that aren't forced into simply shutting down are going to be required to impose user fee after user fee, so that the very people who most need public libraries are going to be denied access to them. The doors to public libraries are going to be locked, bolted and barred to our seniors, our young people and —

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Thank you.

### INTERNATIONAL TOURIST GUIDE DAY

**Mr Bill Grimmett (Muskoka-Georgian Bay):** Before entering the House today, I had the pleasure to participate in a ceremony acknowledging tomorrow, February 21, as International Tourist Guide Day. The ceremony today in this building was hosted by the Canadian Tour Guide Association of Toronto and it was attended by many members of that association.

Awards were presented to Minister Saunderson of the Ministry of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism, which I accepted on his behalf, along with tour bus companies Trentway-Wagar, Pacific Western, Can-Am and Penetang-Midland Coach Lines. Representatives of the tour guide association and the bus tour companies are present today in the west gallery. I'd like to acknowledge their existence.

February 21, International Tourist Guide Day, has given me the opportunity to reflect on and appreciate the tourist guide operators of Ontario and their determination in promoting tourism in our province. I would like to ask all members of the House to join with me today in thanking the Canadian Tour Guide Association, who are resplendent in their scarves, and the tourist guides in their own ridings on International Tourist Guide Day. They do a tremendous job in Ontario to promote tourism and make sure people feel welcome in our province.

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** I will note that the member for Muskoka-Georgian Bay — I am sorry to see about your shoulder. It happened last night when the legislators thumped the press gallery 7-1 at the game.

### NIAGARA DETENTION CENTRE

**Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines):** Up to 130 well-paid jobs could disappear in Niagara when the region's only provincial jail is shut down. The Ontario government has announced that it will be closing the Niagara Detention Centre in Thorold, one of 14 facilities being shut down around the province, in favour of the so-called superjails.

To the people in the Niagara region it means the following: The closure means Niagara prisoners will be sent to Hamilton to serve their time. Scores of corrections officers, supervisors, cooks, counsellors and other jail staff will be looking for other jobs. This is indeed having a bad economic impact on our community as well as not being good for the corrections system.

Many believed the jail, a maximum security facility built to hold up to 256 inmates, would be spared because it's relatively new, only 22 years old. Brock University economics professor Lou Soroka said that on top of the initial loss of 130 jobs, another 65 jobs may be lost in negative spinoff from so many better-paid workers losing their purchasing power. Jim Wells, who's with the John Howard Society in Niagara as executive director, said that the new superjails, which would have fewer guards and rely more on video surveillance, would be harder to control, that there would likely be more incidents such as prisoners beating each other. Wells said many people end up in provincial jails who have mental problems and wouldn't be able to protect themselves in such situations.

There seems to be another consensus developing that the Niagara regional detention centre should be kept open and the government should reconsider its position. I agree with that.

### HOSPITAL RESTRUCTURING

**Mr Floyd Laughren (Nickel Belt):** I have risen in this House numerous times about hospital restructuring in the Sudbury area and I rise on the same issue today.



I'll be meeting with the Minister of Health later today to discuss the restructuring issues that are the mandate of the ministry, not the commission. No matter how much this government says otherwise, ultimately the health care decisions in this province are made by the Minister of Health. I am pleased that the minister is taking the time to meet with us to discuss the remaining issues.

The Minister of Health makes the final decisions regarding money and restructuring. We still don't know how much money will be reinvested in the community as a result of hospital restructuring.

The community leaders would also like to know how much money the province will contribute to the capital costs associated with hospital restructuring. The workers are still waiting to hear about a comprehensive labour adjustment strategy. No restructuring should take place until this strategy is fully developed.

As well, the community wants to know what will happen regarding community-based services needed as a result of hospital closures. We must know how these community-based services are going to be funded and ultimately delivered. I look forward to continuing this valuable dialogue with the minister about the health needs of the people of the Sudbury area.

#### MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

**Mr Dan Newman (Scarborough Centre):** I rise today to speak about democracy. The opposition has been screaming about democracy for weeks now, calling on our government to be democratic and hold a referendum on the issue of Metropolitan Toronto amalgamation.

Let me inform the opposition about the total and blatant disregard of democracy that is taking place in Scarborough. I challenge the opposition not to support a vote where residents must place their name, their address and their signature directly on their ballot. Where has the secret vote gone in Scarborough?

1340

The Scarborough referendum may go down in history as one of the most undemocratic votes in the history of the western world. My constituency office has been flooded with calls from many constituents who are refusing to vote, refusing to be part of this affront to their democratic rights, and I have many constituents who have come to Scarborough from parts of the world where political persecution is a way of life. Many came here as refugees trying to escape from undemocratic governments. What do I tell them about Scarborough's government? I challenge the opposition to stand up today and speak out against the Scarborough ballot. I challenge them to demand democracy from Scarborough council.

#### SCHOOL BOARDS

**Mr Alvin Curling (Scarborough North):** The social development committee has been literally flooded with requests from worried parents and teachers who want to speak on Bill 104, the Fewer School Boards Act. So great is the demand for people to have their democratic say that we may only hear from 10% of those who want to present.

This government was elected on a populist wave and claimed to be committed to listening to the people, but actions speak louder than words. Both the process of this legislation and its content are profoundly undemocratic. This legislation will result in a dramatic overhauling of our education system. Local autonomy will be gutted in favour of even bigger bureaucracies.

This government claims to want to streamline administration, but its plan will only backfire, resulting in more spending on bureaucrats and less on kids. The Education Improvement Commission, handpicked by the minister, will have unprecedented and sweeping powers to impose decisions on our schools and communities.

The minister has waged a relentless attack on dedicated educators and trustees, who are key stakeholders in our education system. Instead of creating a crisis, the minister should have been creating cooperation between the stakeholders and focusing his energies on what really counts: the future of our young people.

Considering the dramatic impact that this legislation will have, we must have an extension in the time allocation motion to fully consider Bill 104's impact. I call on the government to stop this reckless abuse of its power in the name of democracy and for the wellbeing of our kids. That would be democracy.

#### EDUCATION FINANCING

**Mr Rosario Marchese (Fort York):** I attended a meeting today at Harbord Collegiate in my riding. I understand that M. Snobelen was invited to come, but unfortunately he's a busy man and he couldn't come to the debate that we had today. He missed it. He's obviously busy.

People in this community, students and teachers, are very worried, and they're concerned about the rhetoric of this government talking about education being a great equalizer. It can be, but if you look at the rhetoric of this government versus the facts, it belies it.

They've already taken \$800 million away from secondary schools and post-secondary education. They have effectively eliminated junior kindergarten, which can be an important equalizer in the education system for a lot of people. They have, through Bill 104, effectively exterminated local boards, exterminating an important voice for public education. They are silencing those voices that would keep governments accountable. That's why they're getting rid of the trustees by doing what they're doing. And they are increasing tuition fees yet again, twice in a row, last year and this year.

People are worried because they can't afford the kind of cutbacks this government is inflicting on students and parents of our communities. They urge this government to reconsider those cutbacks, and I —

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Thank you.

#### MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

**Mr Steve Gilchrist (Scarborough East):** A true chorus of opinion and questions on the "one Toronto" proposal were heard all across Metro Toronto last night. Just over 2,000 people participated in a night of dialogue



with Progressive Conservative MPPs and cabinet ministers in 18 town-hall-style meetings.

The goal of these meetings was for all sides of the amalgamation debate to be heard, and that's what was accomplished. These meetings basically built on the public consultation, the hearings that are taking place here at Queen's Park. These gatherings were pure public consultation. Ordinary citizens were able to ask government members questions and become fully informed on the issue. Many of the previous events staged have been organized by and geared exclusively to groups who are opposed to unifying Toronto.

Local citizens last night were given a great opportunity to learn what was being proposed and why. Each meeting had its own individual atmosphere in which the objectives were openly and democratically discussed.

We believe our unification proposal would mean an enhanced lifestyle. We believe the proposal would mean greater benefits to the citizens of Toronto.

Some criticism is honest, well intentioned and truly constructive; some criticism is based on a simple fear of change, which is understandable; some criticism is driven by personal or political self-interest.

In a world of necessary change, good government must be rational and yet decisive. The time for action is now.

#### NEW DEMOCRATIC PARTY ADVERTISING

**Mr John R. Baird (Nepean):** On a point of privilege, Mr Speaker: I would like to raise a point of privilege based on your ruling of January 22, 1997, relating to the distribution of communications products.

I have a pamphlet here that was printed by the New Democratic Party caucus services. Taxpayers' money was used to print this pamphlet. Taxpayers' money was used to distribute this pamphlet. It is printed in NDP colours, and the NDP logo appears both on the inside of the pamphlet and again on the back cover.

Mr Speaker, your January 22 ruling clearly directed members of the House not to prejudge a decision of the House in their communications with the public. As you stated in your ruling relating to unqualified claims made in the government's communications pamphlet, "In my opinion, they convey the impression that the passage of the requisite legislation was not necessary or was a foregone conclusion," and that you would not have come to such a conclusion "had these claims or proposals...been qualified by a statement that they would only become law if and when the Legislature gave its stamp of approval to them."

As well, Mr Speaker, you clearly expressed your personal objection to the propriety of public funds being used to advocate, through advertising, a particular position on a matter that is before the House, stating that you "would find it offensive if taxpayer dollars were being used to convey a political or partisan message."

This pamphlet makes reference to policy matters that have not yet been passed by the House, specifically Bill 103, as the front cover reads, "What's the real cost of the Mike Harris megacity?" yet there is no reference anywhere in this pamphlet that the policy in question is currently before the Legislature or that amendments to the legislation are possible.

By your definition of January 22, 1997, this pamphlet has prejudged a matter before this House and made use of public funds in order to do so.

The point of privilege I am raising is not with reference to the erroneous or fallacious rhetorical flights of fancy or even the bad cartoons; the clear contempt you will find in this pamphlet, paid for with taxpayer dollars, is that the NDP caucus has prejudged the debate of the Legislature and given the reader the impression that the legislation, Bill 103, which is currently in the public hearing stage of committee, has already been passed into law.

I would ask that you, Mr Speaker, using the same logic you followed in your ruling of January 22, 1997, define that the distribution of this pamphlet by the members for Dovercourt, Beaches-Woodbine, Fort York, Riverdale and Rainy River, paid for by taxpayers and containing unqualified claims relating to as yet unpassed legislation, constitutes a prima facie case of contempt for this Legislature.

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Member for Nepean, could you just, in a concise way, point out to me the offending words that the prima facie case would be based on.

**Mr Baird:** I think the pamphlet clearly prejudices. It does not make one bit of reference to the public hearing stage of the committee. It states that it is a foregone conclusion.

**The Speaker:** With respect, to the member for Nepean, I'm not asking for you to make the same speech — I appreciate it, and it was very well worded. What I need to know is what the offending words are that you believe would cause the prima facie case.

**Mr Baird:** Referring to the pamphlet, the reverse cover, the document states, "The Harris Conservatives have downloaded more than \$500 million in costs for services on to Metro."

We have not fully considered or, in my judgement, debated one single bill with respect to that statement. It says "have;" it does not say "is proposing," it does not say "plans to" on the reverse cover. "As a result, we will see services cut and property taxes rise dramatically." It says "have downloaded."

With respect to your ruling, Mr Speaker, you said that these issues before the House must be considered before the decisions are made. This communications proposal states that the Legislature has acted. It says, "The Harris [government has] downloaded more than \$500 million." It has not. That legislation comes before the Ontario Legislature and is debated.

1350

It says the Mike Harris government "is making local governments pay for social services." It is proposing that a partnership be established. It has not done anything. It is proposing to. That is on the inside cover.

"This will mean," it says — and if you recall my speech in response to the member for Oakwood, his comments, I specifically pointed to the word "will." In that speech I specifically made reference to "will." If it had said "would" it perhaps would have been less problematic. But this pamphlet clearly says "will." It does not anywhere in the pamphlet indicate that public hear-



ings are being undertaken on a good number of the pieces of this legislation. It doesn't indicate that the bill has been introduced.

**The Speaker:** To the member for Nepean, I will take this under advisement. I appreciate the effort and the opportunity to review it when you gave it to me before making your point of privilege. That was very helpful. I'll look through it and report back to you and the members of this Legislature at a later date.

**Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: You made some reference, when one of the members of the Legislature got up, about an injury that took place. I'm worried about the impartiality of the Speaker's position.

**The Speaker:** I'm afraid that's way out of order. So we'll move right to question period. Oh, I'm sorry, that's right. I appreciate the intervention from the member for St Catharines, but the record is correct.

#### REPORT, INFORMATION AND PRIVACY COMMISSIONER

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** I beg to inform the House that I have today laid upon the table a special report to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario on the disclosure of personal information at the Ministry of Health submitted by Mr Tom Wright, Information and Privacy Commissioner of Ontario.

**Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma):** Where is the report?

**The Speaker:** The report is, in fact, downstairs.

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker:** I misunderstood your question. The report is now, I assume, at this point in time being put into the members' mailboxes downstairs.

**Mr Wildman:** I need it here.

**The Speaker:** I appreciate the fact you want it here, but there is no history for providing the report to the members in the Legislature. It's provided in the boxes downstairs. You may collect it. As of this moment it's being distributed.

**Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex South):** Mr Speaker, I rise today on a point of privilege pursuant to section 21 of the standing rules of order, and beyond those I understand it's under your jurisdiction not only with regard to the privileges of members but also to their security in this precinct, and it's to that I speak.

This morning early, because it's my custom to get in very early in the morning before other staff and so forth come —

*Interjections.*

**Mr Crozier:** Wait till you hear this, this is serious. I was sitting reading and as I looked up I came face to face with a rat. I knew it —

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker:** Order. The member for Welland-Thorold, please. Let's continue.

**Mr Crozier:** Speaker, to continue, I knew it wasn't a member of the government caucus because I would have recognized it, and I didn't recognize this rat.

I don't know what the procedure is in the legislative buildings to control this kind of varmint, but what happened was that in pursuit of this rat, because being in the opposition I'm accustomed to it, I then —

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker:** The member for Essex South, if you'd wrap it up quickly. Thank you.

**Mr Crozier:** I pursued the rat. I pulled the couch out from where the rat went, and I couldn't find a hole and I couldn't find the rat. I can only assume that my rat — the rat — is in the couch. So I would ask, sir, if you would contact the appropriate department so they might help me do away with this problem. Thank you, sir.

**The Speaker:** There must be procedures in place, and I'm certain I can find them, that you can bring this up to the proper people besides the Speaker of the House and the Legislature. I can only say to the member that I will refer this to the —

*Interjection:* The rat pack.

**The Speaker:** — to the rat pack, I suppose, yes, and I'll report to you through correspondence from my office with yours. I sincerely appreciate your bringing that up.

**Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines):** On a point of privilege, Mr Speaker — I won't make reference to the hockey game that you played last night — this is on a ruling that you made and I think it's very relevant to something that's happening at this very time. This is a different one from what was raised the other day.

Remember in your ruling, on page 18 — this is the landmark ruling you made on government advertising — you said as follows:

"On a separate but related matter, the member for St Catharines expressed concerns on Tuesday of last week about the unequal access to advertising resources as between the government and the opposition." This is your quote. "He asked whether the Speaker had any jurisdiction to restrict the government from disseminating allegedly self-serving, partisan advertising.

"At this point in my ruling, I want to express some personal concerns about the propriety of public funds being used to advocate, through advertising, a particular position on a matter that is before the House. Let me be clear: I am not speaking here about politically paid for advertising, but rather about funds that are contributed to by every Ontarian, regardless of his or her political view. Personally, I would find it offensive if taxpayer dollars were being used to convey a political or partisan message. There is nothing wrong with members debating an issue and influencing public opinion; in fact, it is part of our parliamentary tradition to do so. But I feel that it's wrong for a government to attempt to influence public opinion through advertising that is paid for with public funds — which I might add, are not available to the opposition — instead of through debate in the House."

My point is this: We have had raised in the House already the Ministry of Municipal Affairs' ads, I think worth \$650,000, we had raised Ministry of Education ads, worth \$650,000, both of which have the Premier on them giving what I think to be a partisan message. But now we have a further set of ads from the Ministry of Health, even though they weren't supposed to be forthcoming, again with the Premier on these ads. They're on the hockey games, they're on the newscasts, they're everywhere, and they're at the cost of the taxpayers of this province.



I would ask you again, in light of your comments, in light of your personal evaluation of the last set of ads, whether you would look into that matter to see if there's any comment that you might have of a further nature in this regard.

**The Speaker:** To the member for St Catharines, I appreciate the point of privilege. Let me just say if you had read the next paragraph of my ruling, it would have crystallized, I think, the issue very well.

**Mr Bradley:** I didn't want to take too long.

**The Speaker:** I appreciate that, so I'll just read it for you.

"As I say, these are my personal views. While I sympathize with the member for St Catharines, I do not have the jurisdiction to examine the propriety of such campaigns unless they raise a matter of privilege or contempt, a subject I have already addressed."

I say to the member for St Catharines, I've ruled they don't raise a matter of privilege or contempt. I've ruled on the other ones that you brought to my attention. Those did not raise an issue of privilege or contempt either. So I can only ask that you view the next paragraph, and as you can see, the decision I took at the time is consistent with what I've ruled subsequently.

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**Mr Bradley:** So you still think that they are self-serving government advertising?

**The Speaker:** That's debate; again, it could be a good question.

Before you go on the point of privilege, member for Windsor-Sandwich, I will say that in checking the orders on tabling reports, the only report that gets delivered in here is the budget. All other reports get distributed exactly the way the privacy commissioner has distributed this report, which means it gets tabled, one copy, which has been done, and the rest get distributed downstairs.

I know that can make for a rush, but we, as this House, have agreed that the only tabling of a report to each member of this Legislature is a budget. Anything other than a budget will not be tabled and that's why the report from Mr Wright was not tabled today.

**Mr Wildman:** A modest proposal: Let's change that to make it simpler.

**The Speaker:** Again, the member for Algoma, that's a decision the House leaders will take. It's not a decision for the Speaker to take.

The member for Windsor-Sandwich.

**Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor-Sandwich):** Yesterday I raised a point and called it a point of privilege, with regard to a question I'd asked in the House and the issue of the deputy minister not being aware of ads that we believe were through the political arm of the Premier's office.

For clarification today and after your recommendation to review page 14 of the standing orders, 21(a) and (b), I believe it likely doesn't fit within those confines and will be readdressing that in a more appropriate manner that doesn't include the Speaker's office.

**The Speaker:** I appreciate the information and thank the member for Windsor-Sandwich, and I will obviously not report back on it, then. I'll leave it to your good offices.

## ORAL QUESTIONS

### SPECIAL EDUCATION

**Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition):**

My question is for the Minister of Education. I have given the minister notice of this question. Almost two years ago to the day, Mike Harris met in an Ottawa coffee shop with Rob Kerwon, father of Gordie Kerwon. Gordie is a 6-foot-tall, handsome, strapping 21-year-old in perfect health, but who has the mind of a three-year-old. Gordie does not speak. He's in diapers. He doesn't play with a football; he plays with teddy bears.

At that meeting with Mr Kerwon, Mike Harris made a personal commitment that he would amend the Education Act so that children like Gordie wouldn't be forced out of school after reaching their 21st birthday.

Minister, Gordie is still learning and making progress. Will you make good on Mike Harris's personal commitment? Will you amend the Education Act so that Gordie and others like him will continue to be able to learn in a school, regardless of whether they are 20 or 21 years of age?

**Hon John Snobelen (Minister of Education and Training):** First, let me say to the Leader of the Opposition that I too share your concerns for this very difficult problem, and I understand that all three parties in this Legislature have grappled over the past 10 years with this issue.

I've spoken with the Premier as late as this morning and he has assured me again of his commitment to helping and supporting families with developmentally disabled children or adults who want to keep them at home.

I want to point out to the Leader of the Opposition that this government has already significantly increased its support for the developmentally disabled who stay at home, through the Ministry of Community and Social Services.

The Ministry of Education and Training is prepared to sit down and examine how legislation could further help these families. If the Leader of the Opposition has legislation he has drafted or some ideas on legislation that might be drafted, I'd ask him to bring it forward to the ministry and we will most certainly work on it with him.

**Mr McGuinty:** Minister, you will know that Gordie's parents have not had it easy. They do everything for their son. They bathe him, they feed him, they brush his teeth and, despite his age, they continue to change his diapers. Not once have they shirked their responsibility as loving parents. Gordie has now turned 21 and his parents now have to pay, by virtue of that fact, \$14,000 a year to keep him in school to ensure that he can continue to learn and develop his skills.

Quite simply, that's just not fair. Gordie's parents have told me that it means a lot to them to know that when they die their son will be able to point to a picture that means, "I'm hungry," or to point to another picture that means, "I want to go to the washroom," or to point to another picture that means, "I'm tired and I want to go to bed."

The Education Act is before committee as we speak, and there's a possibility that arises as a result of that.



You could introduce an amendment right now to ensure that the Education Act is changed so Gordie will be able to continue in school at no expense to his parents. Will you do that?

**Hon Mr Snobelen:** Let me say again that like many other people in this Legislature, I have some personal experience with family members who struggle with this same issue, who worry about their adult children who are developmentally disadvantaged, who worry about who will care for them when they're gone. We've already taken some action as a government to make sure there is more assistance available for those people. But I would not suggest to you, Mr Speaker, nor to the Leader of the Opposition that the system is perfect or that we can't improve it, and we are certainly willing to do that.

The Leader of the Opposition has my personal commitment that if there is legislation he can see that would be useful, we will consider it, we will entertain it, certainly, and if it could be useful for this family and other families, we'll take it on.

But I want to point out that these individual cases are difficult to legislate. I know the Leader of the Opposition appreciates that and understands it, so I would enjoy his input on what legislation might be useful.

**Mr McGuinty:** I've asked you to act and you have not agreed to do so. If you won't act, I will. I'll introduce a private member's bill, and if you won't support it, my government will. I'm making that commitment right here and now. I believe we have a very special responsibility for our most vulnerable, and that includes Gordie Kerwon. His parents are sitting there in the gallery now. They're not asking for much; they're prepared to assume complete responsibility for Gordie until they die. But I think we have a corresponding responsibility, and you and I can help.

I don't think we should make them wait any longer, or other families like them, and you have my assurance that if you were to introduce your amendment, you would have the support of my caucus. So I'm going to ask you again, Minister, will you amend the Education Act to help Gordie Kerwon?

**Hon Mr Snobelen:** Let me stand again and assure the Leader of the Opposition that if he has draft legislation in mind, if he would send it over I would be more than happy to work with him to bring that forward in whatever format would be most useful. If there is a way to improve the situation, he can be assured of this government's support and this government's commitment to help the families of adult disabled people in this province. I give you that assurance once again. I believe this is something all parties would like to cooperate in — I do not believe these are things that should be left for partisan politics — so I would encourage you to do so.

#### HOSPITAL FINANCING

**Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition):** My second question is for the Minister of Health. I think it's perfectly clear to everybody who's paid any attention to this that health care is suffering, particularly basic nursing care in Ontario, as a result of your government's cuts. Every week we hear stories from across the province, stories we thought unbelievable the week before.

We've got a story of a man left dead in a hospital hallway; we've got a story of a man tied to a chair naked, 89 years of age; we've had a story of someone's father whose diapers were not being changed while he was in a hospital. We've had stories of people not receiving basic nursing care. Remember, I'm not talking about doctors or fancy, high-tech, expensive medical equipment; I'm talking about basic nursing care.

Minister, it's your hospital cuts that are the problem. Will you stop cutting dollars from Ontario hospitals?

**Hon David Johnson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Minister of Health, Government House Leader):** What this government will do is continue on a program — indeed, I'm convinced we need to speed up the program — to restructure the hospital system in the province of Ontario. This is an initiative which was begun under the previous government through the district health councils. It's driven from the community level, driven from the grass roots through the district health council reports given to the restructuring commission: How can we deliver better services through our hospitals in our local communities?

I think we need to speed up that program, I think we need to ensure that the program has the resources it needs to complete its study, and I think we need to advance the reinvestments. This government has announced many reinvestments in the hospital system. Indeed, the reinvestments have exceeded the reductions to the hospitals, but I think we need to tie that hand in glove, the reinvestments with the restructuring, to make sure we have the best possible care in our communities.

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**Mr McGuinty:** Yesterday this government hit a new low. Yesterday marked the appearance of a television ad that is costing us 650,000 taxpayer dollars, and do you know what that does for patient care in this province? Nothing. The minister can stand in his place today and tell us he's doing all kinds of things. There's 650 grand, 650 big ones that could have been used for nursing care; \$650,000 would have bought 40,000 nursing care hours. If you want to know where you can invest that money properly, start with that.

Minister, how can you justify, how dare you spend \$650,000 on television ads when people don't get the health care they need right now?

**Hon David Johnson:** First of all, I want to say that we take each one of these situations very seriously. The ministry is pursuing the individual case that was raised yesterday. I expect the ministry will be in discussions today — if not today, early next week — in that regard. I find it interesting to have this point of view raised from the Leader of the Opposition, who when his party was in government spent twice as much on advertising for their red card, for their hospital card, some \$1.5 million. Could we all agree that \$1.5 million spent by the Liberal government in 1990 could be better used for health care in Ontario? In overall terms, the advertising budget of the Liberal government in 1990 will be at least double what this government will spend this year.

**Mr McGuinty:** Basic nursing care in Ontario is disintegrating on your watch. That's the issue and don't forget that. I'm a bit confused about this, Speaker.



They've got \$650,000 to waste on health care commercials, but yesterday the Grand River hospital in Kitchener had to lay off 356 hospital staff, most of them nurses, because of this minister's cuts. Yesterday in this House, after hearing that 20 to 30 patients were lining the hall at Peterborough Civic Hospital, all the minister could say was that the hospital closing commission wasn't acting fast enough.

The issue is not how fast you can close hospitals, but how quickly you will act to ensure that Ontario maintains a decent standard of basic nursing care in its hospitals. That's the question. Minister, when are you going to act on that front? When are you going to act to ensure that we maintain in Ontario a decent standard of basic nursing care in Ontario hospitals?

**Hon David Johnson:** When I receive this question, I look across and see members of the Liberal Party who were in government in 1988, 1989, 1990, who closed over 1,200 beds in Ontario, over 1,200 beds closed by that government.

*Interjections.*

**Mr Mario Sergio (Yorkview):** What did you promise? No cuts.

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Order. Member for Yorkview, you're also out of order and you're not in your chair, and the members of the Liberal caucus, I'd ask you to come to order. I'd like to hear the minister's answer.

**Hon David Johnson:** This government is committed to providing better health care, better hospital care in each of our communities in Ontario. It requires a plan. It requires the work coming up through the communities, through the district health process. That work is under way. We have committed to spend at least \$17.4 billion a year on health care. I can assure you that we have exceeded that amount this year. We will exceed that amount again next year. The plan which is in place, which starts from the grass roots, from the district health councils, is rolling along and we will see those reinvestments, we will see that restructuring, we will see better hospital care in Ontario in each of our communities.

#### DISCLOSURE OF CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION

**Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma):** In the absence of the Premier and the Deputy Premier, I'd like to direct a question to the Chair of Management Board, the government House leader and the Minister of Health with regard to the freedom of information commissioner's report that was tabled today. At the time the government decided to ask for this investigation, we were asking for a public inquiry and made the point that the commissioner did not have the wherewithal to carry out a full-fledged inquiry to get to the bottom of the situation.

We now have the report, which basically says that Mr James received the information from an e-mail that came to the minister's office because of a freedom of information request of one of the newspapers. Can the minister explain why the report does not make clear how widely this e-mail was distributed, who received it and why was it distributed in the way it was, giving out information about physicians' incomes?

**Hon David Johnson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Minister of Health, Government House Leader):** The member opposite will realize that I have not seen the report. The report has just been issued; I've been here answering questions, so I'm unable to answer any of the questions. I can tell you that this government acted quickly, acted to request the privacy commissioner to do this report. We were most anxious to get to the bottom of this situation. We gave our full and utmost cooperation to the privacy commissioner. I'm delighted that the privacy commissioner has now come forward with the report. I'm unaware of all the contents, as are most of the members of the House, because they've not had an opportunity to read it.

I do know that in the press release that has been put out by the Information and Privacy Commissioner he indicates that the information was disclosed on the personal initiative of the individual involved "without the knowledge of, or at the request of, Wilson, staff in the minister's office or the Ministry of Health." I think that clears the minister and the staff of the Ministry of Health.

**Mr Wildman:** Unfortunately, because of the restrictions on the privacy commissioner, the way he had to go about the work he was asked to do, there are many questions still unanswered.

**Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines):** That's why they chose this route.

**Mr Wildman:** I suspect.

The commissioner, as you know, doesn't have the right to subpoena or examine under oath. I have the list, from his report, of the 18 people who were interviewed in his investigation. Could the minister explain why it is that the two individuals, Jan Dymond and George McCague, consultants to the ministry who were in the minister's office, according to the log, on the Saturday prior to James's files being packed on Sunday, are not listed among those interviewed by the commissioner? Why is that? Why is it that these individuals, who were working on contract to the ministry, who were in the office on the Saturday with access, apparently, to files —

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Thank you, member for Algoma. Minister?

**Hon David Johnson:** I'll say once again that I have not had the opportunity, nor have members of this House, to read this report. When this incident arose, the government took swift action to set this investigation in place. It was a thorough investigation and study. It was an independent investigation and study. It took place over a period of about two months. I have full confidence in the Information and Privacy Commissioner. I haven't seen his report, but I have no indication he did anything but the most thorough and professional job and I'm sure the report will speak for itself.

**Mr Wildman:** I refer to the report. On page 7, the commissioner says, "In our view, Wilson and James's offices and the records stored therein were secured from the afternoon of Monday, December 9, 1996, until Thursday, January 9," when the commissioner completed the investigation, but Jan Dymond, George McCague and others were signed in on the weekend of Saturday and Sunday, December 7 and 8, to the minister's office. How can the public feel confident that these political staffers



and consultants who were there on the weekend did not remove, tamper with or destroy records that were subsequently available to the commissioner?

Will the government agree that we have to have a full public inquiry with proper rights of investigation, subpoena and warrants and the right to demand testimony under oath in order to get to the bottom of this situation?

**Hon David Johnson:** I gather that the House leader for the NDP does not have confidence in the Information and Privacy Commissioner, does not have confidence in his report. I don't share that attitude. I believe the commissioner has received the full cooperation of the government. This government acted more quickly than any other government in a similar situation.

I will say in addition to that, the minister himself took the honourable position of stepping aside immediately and I think is to be commended for that. The government took the step of immediately setting in place this study, this independent, arm's-length, thorough study, and now we have the report. I have every confidence in the report and every confidence that this report has got to the bottom of the situation.

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#### COMMUNITY CARE

**Mr Floyd Laughren (Nickel Belt):** I have a question for the Minister of Health concerning the crisis in the community care access centres, which are his responsibility. He will know that in less than two months these community care access centres are supposed to be taking over the provision and coordination of long-term care and community-based services in the province and that funding to municipalities will cease as of April 1.

Given that there are only about 27 working days left until that occurs, could the Minister of Health tell us why he would send a memorandum to all the chairs, his appointed chairs, of these access centres instructing them to halt all transition activities, including the hiring of staff, including the signing of leases, the purchase of equipment and phone systems? Why, with so little time left before that transition occurs, would you be grinding this whole system to a halt?

**Hon David Johnson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Minister of Health, Government House Leader):** To the member for Nickel Belt, actually the letter was sent from the deputy minister, not from me, to all the CCACs in Ontario simply requesting that the CCACs develop a business plan. This is a simple requirement here in the province. All the ministries are going through this process. All the boards and committees are reviewed and expected to go through a similar process. We're simply asking the CCACs, as they come through this fiscal year, along with the ministries to present their business plans.

I will say in addition to that, we have every confidence in the CCACs. There are many volunteers involved who serve their community at great expense to themselves personally but at no remuneration. I believe, with the business plans and with the dedication they have shown, we'll provide a good service to the people of Ontario.

**Mr Laughren:** I'm not questioning the ability of the members of the access centres. I'm questioning your ability to manage this transition. As a matter of fact, the board of directors of the Durham community access centre have resigned en masse, resigned because of that letter sent by your deputy, presumably approved by you, something as important as that. You've caused a lot of anxiety in the Durham region because there's a lot of concern about provision of these services. Could you respond to the region in Durham or extend their funding at least, so we'll make sure there's no gap in the provision of these very important services to the people in Durham?

**Hon David Johnson:** I did talk to the chair from Durham yesterday. I'm confident that the CCACs will understand that a business plan is a relevant piece of information that's necessary in all facets of government. It may be something somewhat foreign to the previous governments, which ran up deficits of some \$11 billion a year. The former Treasurer, former Minister of Finance, I would think, though, would encourage a business plan development through the ministries and through the boards and agencies of the province of Ontario.

I would also say that the CCACs — I have confidence, because they're replacing the former multiservice agencies put in place by the previous government, a very bureaucratic situation with union domination that would not serve the people of Ontario. The CCACs will deliver a better service as this government has structured them.

**Mr Laughren:** The minister is very fond of trying to shift the debate from what he's responsible for to what previous governments were responsible for. This is your problem, this is your chaos, not ours, not the official opposition's. The access centre's board of directors did not resign under any previous government. It's you. They've resigned because of your activities.

What I'm asking you as the Minister of Health is why you will not guarantee, first, that the business plan submitted will be approved on time; and second, that there'll be absolutely no gap in the provision of services or the provision of funding. Keep in mind that you created this monster, that it's your responsibility and you can't pass it off to someone else. Will you give assurances to the people in Durham that there will be absolutely no gap in the provision of services or funding for these services?

**Hon David Johnson:** In fact the former Minister of Health set up the CCACs to replace the former multiservice agencies, which would not have delivered the service to the people of Ontario in an accountable and efficient fashion. I'm very confident that this organization, which replaces the home care agencies and the placement services, will provide a one-stop, better service to the people of Ontario. They will —

*Interjections.*

**Hon David Johnson:** Don't worry, to the member for Nickel Belt. There will be an organization in place. They will be accountable. I'm confident that once the business plans are in place, we will work with them to establish the business plans so the service will be delivered in an accountable, efficient and effective manner to serve the seniors of Ontario.



## HOSPITAL RESTRUCTURING

**Mr Sean G. Conway (Renfrew North):** My question is to the Minister of Health and it concerns his government's hospital policy. Yesterday, appearing before a committee of this Legislature, the president of the Ontario Hospital Association, Mr David MacKinnon, said:

"The government's current policy towards the restructuring of hospitals and the health system as a whole is seriously flawed and must be fundamentally changed before irreparable damage is done. Unless changes are made, the people of this province will face reduced access to care and the quality of that care may decline significantly."

Minister, are you and your colleagues in government prepared now to adjust, amend and revise your hospital restructuring policy to take account of the very serious concerns that the Ontario Hospital Association brought to this Legislature yesterday?

**Hon David Johnson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Minister of Health, Government House Leader):** First, I'll say that this government and the Ministry of Health take very seriously the comments of Mr MacKinnon and the Ontario Hospital Association, but I will say that one other comment Mr MacKinnon made is, "OHA and its members have been, and continue to be, supportive of restructuring in the hospital sector."

What I believe is being expressed is some concern in terms of the resources, the number of commissioners. This government has responded by appointing another commissioner. This government has indicated its willingness to respond, to assist further in the resourcing of the restructuring commission.

Second, this government is committed to making the reinvestments along with the restructuring, and I have certainly given my undertaking to ensure that the reinvestments tie in with the restructuring so that the people of Ontario have a better health care system.

**Mr Conway:** Minister, last week a group of eminent physicians in the city of Peterborough wrote in a public letter, in part, "The medical staff of the Peterborough hospitals are becoming increasingly concerned about the deterioration of patient care in local facilities, our community and region because of government funding cuts."

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Minister, yesterday the OHA in its submission admitted that it supports restructuring, but in a multipage report this presentation pulsates with real and serious concerns about the nature and extent of the cuts you are making in your hospital policy. Are you prepared today, in response to these several concerns not just of the OHA but of the Peterborough medical community, to amend, adjust and revise your current hospital restructuring policy so these people and thousands of patients and their families can be given some level of comfort that you are not going to wreck and ruin this part of the health system?

**Hon David Johnson:** I will reiterate, as I said in an answer to a previous question, that the Ministry of Health is sitting down with the people in Peterborough, with the hospital in Peterborough, to examine that particular situation, which was raised in this House yesterday. I

expect that to happen today or very early next week at the latest.

Secondly, the people of Ontario have the right to be concerned about government cuts to health care, particularly \$2 billion worth of cuts from the federal Liberal government. In the face of those cuts, notwithstanding that some small amount of \$20 million has been reinvested through the recent budget, this government is committed to retaining at least \$17.4 billion — I'm here to assure you that it will be greater than that — through the restructuring, through the reinvestments and so many different aspects, cardiac care, cancer treatment, kidney dialysis. This hospital system in the province of Ontario —

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Thank you, Minister.

## CHILD POVERTY

**Mr Gilles Pouliot (Lake Nipigon):** In the absence of both the Premier and the Minister of Finance, I too would like to direct my question to the Chair of Management Board.

You will recall that on Tuesday, the day of the federal budget, the federal minister Mr Martin, aside from his almost do-nothing budget, pledged \$200 million. This is money leaving the federal government, directed to the most needy in our province, children. Yet in response your Minister of Finance, Mr Eves, said on Tuesday that the government had done exactly what you just said: that the federal Liberals had taken \$2 billion in the past two years out of transfer payments in health, social services and education and now they're coming with a pittance.

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Question.

**Mr Pouliot:** Will you honour the commitment of the \$200 million of federal money and not put it into your general fund, jeopardizing —

**The Speaker:** Thank you, member for Lake Nipigon.

**Hon David Johnson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Minister of Health, Government House Leader):** I believe this is a question which is more properly addressed to the Minister of Community and Social Services.

**Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Community and Social Services):** To the honourable member, Ontario has already made a commitment some time ago that any moneys freed up through the national federal investment in a child benefit would go to target programs for high-risk children. That commitment stands. We have not changed. What we saw in the federal budget was an initial investment that will be required if we are to make the child benefit work. The provinces and Ottawa are now working on the final design to come up with an option that will work the best.

**Mr Pouliot:** I'll be very candid with you because we've asked the Premier and he's busy; we couldn't get a straight answer. Some members of your caucus, with respect, have referred to it as a \$200-million windfall. Today you have given me the assurance that the money will go directly to the people who need it the most. In view of that I'm satisfied with your answer. I'll sit down right now. I have no further comment. Thank you.



**Hon Mrs Ecker:** I think some of the concerns we've seen expressed since the federal budget has come out about the actual impact on the ground on people who are either on social assistance or those who are low-income working poor, if you will, highlight the need for the further design work that the provinces and Ontario are trying to develop right now to make sure that we are not disadvantaging those who are on social assistance and to make sure that any funding does have an incentive to keep families in the workforce. Also, we're trying to make sure that duplication and overlap between the two levels of government are removed.

I look forward to those discussions. Actually, as a result of yesterday's meeting with Minister Pettigrew, we've shortened the time frame to see if we can't do the work faster.

### FOODLAND ONTARIO

**Mr Bert Johnson (Perth):** My question is for the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. It's my understanding that your ministry has given awards to some 26 food retailers in Ontario. I'm very happy to note that Staffen's Food Market in Mitchell has been listed among the award winners and has received recognition for best creative display. I'm extremely pleased by this because the Staffen family run stores in St Marys and Mitchell and have always been strong supporters of their community and the riding of Perth and deserve recognition for their efforts.

For the benefit of other members of the Legislature and indeed those in Perth who are not aware of the recognition which they have received, could you please explain what Foodland Ontario awards are and why the ministry is sponsoring this event?

**Hon Noble Villeneuve (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, minister responsible for francophone affairs):** For many years, the government of Ontario and the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs have sponsored a program known as Foodland Ontario which helps Ontario producers sell their quality produce right here at home in Ontario through Ontario retailers. Part of Foodland Ontario is the retailers' award presentation, which recognizes retailers who have made a year-long effort in supporting and merchandising Ontario-produced goods.

May I also congratulate the folks here from Mitchell for their award. Last Monday, I presented these awards to the winners, and let me tell you that Ontario food retailers are doing a top-notch job in promoting Ontario produce. Ninety per cent of the consumers in Ontario recognize the Foodland logo and they will buy Ontario.

**Mr Bert Johnson:** I've seen the Foodland logo at my local supermarket and I myself buy Ontario products.

I know that Brian Gropp, the general manager of the Stratford Agricultural Society in Stratford, and Brunell Kipfer, Perth County Federation of Agriculture township director for Ellice, are in the gallery today. Both these gentlemen are very interested in the promotion of agricultural products in Ontario.

Can the minister assure my constituents that the ministry is doing everything it can to promote Ontario

food products and that this is taxpayers' money well spent?

**Hon Mr Villeneuve:** Ontario consumers do enjoy Ontario produce, and the Food Land Guidelines have been our mark of showing the quality that is produced in Ontario. As you may know, the agrifood business is the second-most-important engine of the economy, a \$50-billion business here in Ontario. We have been in the markets not only here but indeed exporting to the United States and to the world the well-known quality that is produced here in Ontario. I am proud to have the Foodland Ontario logo showing what indeed our producers can do here in Ontario.

### DISCLOSURE OF CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION

**Mr Gerard Kennedy (York South):** My question is for the acting Premier and Minister of Health. I want to refer you to the report released today which you say you haven't had time to read, yet you were very quick, in response to an earlier question, to say that it exonerates your colleague.

There were concerns raised in this Legislature at the time about the ability of the privacy commissioner to get to the bottom of this situation. There are many unanswered questions. If you look at page 15 of the report, there's a very weak statement made that based on the interviews conducted and information available to the privacy commissioner, he has no reason to believe that Mr Wilson's office or staff requested Mr James to disclose personal information.

1440

I would say to you, Minister, and to your government, that that leaves a number of unanswered questions. Rather than infer those, I would ask, would you agree to have this referred to an all-party committee so that those questions can be answered, so that we can indeed, if that is your wish, find out if there is a basis for —

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Thank you. Minister?

**Hon David Johnson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Minister of Health, Government House Leader):** What I would agree is that this government took swift action, this government set in place an independent investigation and this government gave full cooperation.

What I did refer to, and the only information that I have at this point, since the report was released less than an hour ago and I've been in my place in the House since, is a press release from the Information and Privacy Commissioner himself. His words, not mine, are that the information was released "without the knowledge of, or at the request of, Wilson, staff in the minister's office or the Ministry of Health."

I think we all need to have the time to study this report. I have the utmost confidence in the abilities and in the study of the commissioner.

**Mr Kennedy:** It's very clear that there was a breach; there was a breach of section 42 of the act. The disclosure was not in compliance. This person worked in the minister's office. If you are of that confidence, then you



should not have any problem with complying with what the Premier told me: that if there was anything else we wanted, it will all be made available to us.

I am asking you, as my leader Dalton McGuinty asked the privacy commissioner, to make available determinations about whether the Premier's office knew, because it's not in the report; whether the ministry files were sealed in a timely fashion that didn't compromise the report, because that's not covered; whether or not the inability of this commissioner to provide testimony under oath, to compel people to come forward, was an impediment; whether or not there should be sanctions, because it's not covered in the report, what sanctions; whether there should be a cross-reference here to any criminal things now that there has been a finding that the act has been violated; and any other steps to find out how this can be prevented in future.

Those are not addressed in the report. They are an important part of the understanding of the Legislature and the public in the confidence of your government. Without reading the report, will you undertake at this time to do the further steps necessary because of your confidence in the findings?

**Hon David Johnson:** The member opposite says it's a reasonable request that without reading the report I should specify that certain actions be taken. I don't think there would be very many people who would consider that to be a reasonable request. I think the members of this House should have the opportunity to read the report and see if they're satisfied.

I will say that right from the word go, this government has taken the maximum possible action: set up this study, set up an independent study. The individual in question resigned right from the word go. The minister himself took the most honourable course and stepped aside to allow this investigation to take place. The report has just been issued within the last hour. We should have the opportunity to read it, and I'm sure it will cast full light on this whole situation.

#### TRUCKING SAFETY

**Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South):** My question is to the Minister of Transportation. Earlier this week I asked you a question with regard to reflective taping on truck trailers. As you know, there is presently a requirement that all new trucks that are to be purchased in the province of Ontario have to have reflective taping on them in order to protect drivers from hitting those trucks, as often they're not able to see them when they're coming out of side roads.

I asked you the question earlier this week. I said, "Is the Ministry of Transportation prepared to make it a requirement that all existing trucks presently in the province of Ontario would be retrofitted with reflective taping?" At that time, you didn't adequately give me an answer. Quite frankly, you didn't answer, so I'll ask you the question again.

Are you prepared as the Minister of Transportation to leave this House today, to go to your cabinet office and go back to your ministry and make it a requirement of the province of Ontario that all existing truck trailers now

in the province of Ontario will need to have reflective taping installed?

**Hon Al Palladini (Minister of Transportation):** Again, I'd like to thank the member for asking the question that he asked me the other day. I am going to try to give him the information that I feel the people of Ontario are entitled to know.

This government has taken many steps in making sure that truck safety in the province is done. We have also consulted with the industry and other jurisdictions, including the OPP and the CAA and so on. We are in the process of taking a look at a study that has just concluded with industry and MTO to see how we can implement a lot of changes. I want to say to the member that taping is on the table and there has been discussion with industry. We are going to take a look to see how we can implement what the member is asking. I certainly agree with what he's asking.

**Mr Bisson:** What I'm asking you to do is take the tape off the table and put it on the truck where it belongs. The trucking association and other shippers are asking, "Will you make this requirement so you can level the playing field within the trucking industry to make it a requirement for all truck operators?" It's an easy thing.

You say that you're serious about truck safety, you say that you want to make an impact on safety on our highways; this is an opportunity where you can do so. It's not a big-ticket item. The industry agrees; the OPP agrees; everybody in the field says it should be done. Will you commit today to go back to the ministry office and prepare to make the statement that you will make it a requirement in the province of Ontario for those trucks that are now on the road to be retrofitted with that tape? Yes or no?

**Hon Mr Palladini:** The question comes from a member whose party did absolutely nothing when it came to truck safety while they were in government. The member is basically asking a question that says, "Let's go buy a roll of tape and we're going to put it on a truck." The member thinks it's that easy. There are some things that have to be done in making sure that safety is protected on our highways.

I want to say to the member again that we are going to take a lot of initiatives, a lot more than he —

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Order.  
New question.

#### HOSPITAL RESTRUCTURING

**Mr Tim Hudak (Niagara South):** My question is to the Minister of Health and concerns hospital restructuring currently going on in the Niagara Peninsula. Recently, the Niagara District Health Council's hospital restructuring steering committee released its report entitled *Made in Niagara*. I believe the people in Niagara understand the need for change in the way our health care system works and I think they want to see the highest quality care while maintaining accessibility and accountability. However, from the point of view of Niagara's smaller communities, like Fort Erie, like Port Colborne, like Wainfleet, the *Made in Niagara* report simply overwhelmed



any instinctive understanding and appreciation of the need for change.

I was with people in Fort Erie at the Leisureplex, 3,000 taxpayers who voiced their opposition to the closure of emergency at Douglas Memorial Hospital. I was at a similar meeting in Port Colborne at Lakeshore Catholic High School with 2,000 taxpayers. Frank Sheehan, the member for Lincoln, and I attended a similar meeting of 5,000 people in Grimsby. Frank Sheehan and I are supporting the people from our ridings and we want to know how can we assure those voices are heard in Niagara.

**Hon David Johnson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Minister of Health, Government House Leader):** I thank the member for Niagara South because I know that he's been working hard with his constituents on this particular issue and a number of other issues. This is, of course, a process that began through the previous government, the district health council process. It's based on getting information up from the communities, from the local residents, to have consultations with them and recommendations for health care services, hospital services in their communities.

I would say to the member for Niagara South that those people deserve to be heard, they have the right to be heard. Frankly, from the point of view of the Ministry of Health, I fully expect that the district health council will indeed hear the people from Niagara as it goes through the process and reflect their views in the restructuring and the recommendations they make for hospitals in the Niagara region.

**Mr Hudak:** Obviously I'm very concerned about the difference between the small community hospitals and the larger centres. I attended the Ontario Hospital Association conference to hear an address by the parliamentary assistant for health, the member for Huron, Helen Johns. Mrs Johns said: We are aware of the special circumstances of rural Ontario. We are taking them into consideration. Let me assure you that there will be no cookie-cutter approach to hospital restructuring."

I fully agree with Mrs Johns's statement. Smaller communities in Niagara South, like Port Colborne and Fort Erie, have special circumstances that must be taken into account. Access to emergency services, for example, simply must be preserved. How can the people of Port Colborne, Wainfleet and Fort Erie be assured that their special circumstances will be taken into account?

1450

**Hon David Johnson:** I would say to the member for Niagara South that indeed the people from Fort Erie, Port Colborne and Wainfleet have every right to expect, and I would insist, that the district health council consultation process will be sensitive to their needs, will listen to the people from these communities. I expect that the recommendations that come forward will indeed reflect the views that are being expressed in our communities.

The member for Niagara South has said this is not a cookie-cutter approach. I could not agree more. This is a process that needs to be sensitive to each individual community in the province of Ontario. In Niagara there are special circumstances, there are different circumstances. The restructuring commission and the district

health council reports need to listen to the people, will not take a cookie-cutter approach and will make, in my estimation, recommendations which will reflect the needs of people in those areas.

## GASOLINE PRICES

**Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines):** My question is for the Minister of Economic Development; I'll try him on this question. I asked him a question about gasoline pricing a number of months ago and he said he thought the prices were very good in the province; that's when people were being gouged. This morning in the Legislature the member for Quinte, large as life, was up pointing the finger at the federal government and saying, "Why doesn't the federal government do something about gasoline prices and predatory pricing," and so on.

You have within your jurisdiction provincially, without looking at the feds or the local government or anybody else, jurisdiction to end predatory pricing. Will you give an undertaking to the House today that your government will introduce provincial legislation to define predatory pricing as an offence outside of the federal Competition Act; that is, not allow the major oil companies to undercut the independents, put them out of business and remove all competition?

**Hon William Saunderson (Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism):** I'm happy to respond to the question. It's getting to be a habit, responding to that gentleman over there.

**Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma):** That's the way it works.

**Hon Mr Saunderson:** Well, we hear him a lot.

I would just like to respond to the question by saying that of course, from an economic development and tourism point of view, we are concerned in this government about any price we think is not fair to the consumer. If you travel across Canada, I think our prices that I see at the pumps these days are quite fair. When one travels outside Canada, our prices here are also comparable — and I say that again, "comparable" — to what I see going on in the world. There are certain areas that are closer to gas and oil production facilities and therefore pay a lesser price, but I think under our circumstances our prices are quite fair.

**Mr Bradley:** The member for Quinte will be very surprised to know that the pricing seems to be all right.

**Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre):** Shocked and appalled.

**Mr Bradley:** "Shocked and appalled" I think is the terminology we would use. But I'm giving you a chance. I'm the House leader of the opposition. I'm prepared to speak on behalf of my colleagues. I would bet, if I were a betting person, that Bud Wildman as the House leader of the NDP would give the same permission. We will pass this bill, all three readings in one day, if you will bring forward a piece of legislation to define predatory pricing as an offence outside of the federal Competition Act; that is, if you will bring forward legislation to prevent the major oil companies from undercutting, from selling at one price to independents and then charging less than that in their own stations to put the independents out of business. If you will bring in such legisla-



tion, we in the opposition will pass it in one day. Will you do that today?

**Hon Mr Saunderson:** I'd like to just respond by talking a little bit about the economic philosophy of this government.

*Laughter.*

**Hon Mr Saunderson:** I know, you laugh. Obviously you laughed when you were in power or we would not have the huge deficit that we have now in this government. But let me just tell you over there that we on this side of the House believe in the free enterprise system. We don't intend to dictate to companies what they should and should not do, provided they act with reason. I have no intention of interfering with the free enterprise system, the pricing system. If we were to do that we would be a laughingstock, sir. It would be a big mistake for this province. We would not attract businesses to this province.

What we have now is a system that encourages businesses. We've lowered the income tax rate. We've changed the labour laws. We've done a lot to encourage business to come here. That's what we mean on this side of the House that we are pro-business. We're open for business.

**Mr Wildman:** Mr Speaker, on a point of privilege: Would you explain to us all here how the member for Quinte is going to be able to walk now that he's been cut off at the knees?

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** New question.

#### NIAGARA DETENTION CENTRE

**Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold):** I've got a question to the Minister of Correctional Services. The Niagara Detention Centre in Thorold is one of the newest detention centres in this province. It's also one of the most efficient, with a per diem cost of but \$88 a day for adult inmates. It services a unique part of the province, Niagara region, where it has a large number of federal immigration detainees and some of the special pressures of border regions. Why would the Niagara Detention Centre, one of the newest, most efficient detention centres this province owns, be on your chopping block of detention centres and jails to be shut down or privatized?

**Hon Robert W. Runciman (Solicitor General and Minister of Correctional Services):** The member is correct in respect to one of the newer facilities, but it is 24 years old, which makes it one of the newer facilities, I will grant you that, but the per diem costs are slightly under \$100 per day and our objective is to drop the current rates quite dramatically. The average is \$124 per day across the system. Niagara is somewhat under \$100 per day. We're looking at an average across the system, with phase 1 of the restructuring program, of \$75 a day, and achieving somewhere in the neighbourhood of \$75 million to \$80 million in annualized savings for the taxpayers of this province.

I appreciate the member's concerns with respect to his constituency and his community, but we have to look at the broader concerns with respect to the ongoing deficit and debt burden that all of us face as taxpayers in this province. We have to address it, and we're looking at the

corrections system in terms of the most efficient operation we can operate in this province.

**Mr Kormos:** It remains one of the newest and one of the most efficient in terms of per diem cost. When one considers the transportation costs that are going to be incurred by transporting inmates and persons in custody to farther and farther distances away from Niagara region, when one considers the loss of the \$1.2 million a year that the federal government pays for immigration detainees, this government, by virtue of shutting down the NDC, is going to create costs just out of this world. As well, it's going to destroy over 137 jobs in Niagara region by shutting down the Niagara Detention Centre. There's simply no rationale for it.

So be it, but it remains — the mayor of Thorold has requested an opportunity meet with this minister to discuss his ill-conceived plans to shut down the NDC and to create 137 new positions on the soup kitchen lines for the jobless that are going to be created by virtue of it. Will this minister please tell us now that he's going to meet with Mayor Woodhouse and the folks from the city of Thorold?

**Hon Mr Runciman:** The member mentioned the transportation costs and a number of other elements of this decision, and they've all been factored in in terms of achieving the long-term goal of dramatically dropping the per diem cost to taxpayers in this province of housing people in provincial institutions, jails and prisons.

I don't want to encourage any misleading expectations on the part of the municipality, but I'm certainly prepared to arrange with the member an opportunity to sit down and discuss the situation with him. We have had some preliminary discussions with federal officials as well with respect to the possibility of their taking on one or two or perhaps more of the institutions we will be vacating, so we are having those kinds of preliminary discussions. I'm sure the member and I can discuss this afterwards and arrange a mutually suitable opportunity to sit down and discuss it with representatives from his constituency.

1500

#### TRUCKING SAFETY

**Mr John O'Toole (Durham East):** My question is to the Minister of Transportation. As you know, my riding of Durham East is encircled completely by highways — Highway 401, Highway 35, 115, Highway 12, 7A — and I know how important highway safety is to my constituents. Indeed, Minister, I know how important it is to you. On occasion you've talked about the top priority of your ministry being truck safety, and I commend you for that.

Although some progress has been made, the area of wheel separation on commercial vehicles remains a serious concern to many Ontarians. Many of my constituents have submitted ideas to MTO on how to prevent wheels from flying off trucks. Many of these inventions are already out there. Could you please tell the House what process for evaluation of potential technical solutions for wheel separation is in place?

**Hon Al Palladini (Minister of Transportation):** I'd like to thank the member for Durham East for the question. I certainly have made it very clear to my staff



at MTO that we cannot ignore any ideas that are being brought forward. Yesterday members of the public were given an opportunity to present their ideas to MTO staff and industry staff to see what can be developed from that. This committee will be given a time frame of approximately six months in which to produce a report on the viability of any potential solutions. I want to assure this House that any submissions from citizens will be seriously considered in making sure that truck safety is protected.

**Mr O'Toole:** I'm pleased to hear this. One worry I have, however, is that an invention might only be seeking a commercial endorsement from your ministry. Could you tell me and the House the mechanisms that you have put in place to secure the independence of this commitment and the recommendations?

**Hon Mr Palladini:** The member for Durham East raises a very good point. I am pleased to tell the House that we have asked Professional Engineers Ontario to direct the committee and oversee the formal evaluation of the inventions. The federal Transport Development Centre, which is responsible for vehicle standards, will also assist in the evaluations. It is important to have a credible third party help with the evaluation process so that it is done in an unbiased matter.

The goal and purpose of this committee is to help promote truck safety. It is not the intention to provide commercial endorsements of any products but simply to recommend further research if necessary, and I look forward to what the committee has to say. But finally, I'd like to remind everyone that whatever is holding wheels on to a vehicle, maintenance of all components of a vehicle is important. No vehicle is safe unless it's properly maintained.

## MOTIONS

### STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

**Hon David Johnson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Minister of Health, Government House Leader):** I move that, notwithstanding the order of the House on February 6, 1997, the standing committee on social development be authorized to meet for the purpose of public hearings on Bill 104 from 6:30 pm to 9:30 pm instead of 9 am to 12 pm on Tuesday, February 25, 1997.

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

## PETITIONS

### NORTH YORK BRANSON HOSPITAL

**Mr Monte Kwinter (Wilson Heights):** I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the final report of the Metropolitan Toronto District Health Council hospital restructuring committee has recommended that North York Branson Hospital merge with York-Finch hospital;

"Whereas this recommendation will remove emergency and inpatient services currently provided by North York Branson Hospital, which will seriously jeopardize medical care and the quality of health for the growing population which the hospital serves, many being elderly people who in numerous cases require treatment for life-threatening medical conditions;

"We petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reject the recommendation contained within the final report of the Metropolitan Toronto District Health Council hospital restructuring committee as it pertains to North York Branson Hospital, so that it retains, at minimum, emergency and inpatient services."

I've affixed my signature.

## MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

**Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale):** I have a petition with well over 300 signatures, mostly signed by food bank recipients and low-income people in my riding. The petition reads:

"Citizens Have the Democratic Right to Be Heard on Megacity.

"To the Legislature of Ontario:

"Whereas 'bigger government is not better' and the Mike Harris government has no right to dictate a megacity upon the citizens of Metro Toronto; and

"Whereas the megacity is being imposed on 2.3 million citizens in Metro Toronto without giving people a voice in the future of their cities and neighbourhoods; and

"Whereas Bill 103 puts municipal councils in Metro Toronto under trusteeship, ending local democracy; and

"Whereas a megacity could lead to mega property tax increases, mega user fees and mega cuts in services; and

"Whereas the Tories never proposed abolishing local government in favour of bigger government during the election campaign;" — in fact, they pledged to do the opposite —

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario as follows:

"To give the 2.3 million people in Metro Toronto a say in the future of their cities and stop the imposition of a megacity and stop the undemocratic takeover of our cities by non-elected trustees."

I affix my signature to this petition as I thoroughly agree with it.

## ADOPTION

**Mr Bob Wood (London South):** I have a petition signed by a number of people in the London area. It reads as follows:

"We, the undersigned, demand that government legislation be introduced and passed into law forthwith to:

"(1) Abolish the mandatory counselling requirement attached to disclosure services under the Child and Family Services Act; and

"(2) Grant adopted adults right of access to their own original, ie, unamended, birth certificates.

"These commonsense measures will promote autonomy for Ontarians who happen to be adopted, will establish parity between adopted and non-adopted persons with



respect to the right to obtain one's own birth information and will allow for the reinvestment of millions of tax dollars presently spent on perpetuating a myth."

### EDUCATION

**Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands):** I have a petition here that's signed by all of the teachers at Kingston Collegiate and Vocational Institute in Kingston.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson):** No.

**Mr Gerretsen:** Mr Speaker, this is a petition. It's signed by all of the teachers there, and it basically says, "Don't allow the Tories to cut the heart out of education."

I've signed this, and I'd like to file this with the Clerk at this stage.

### FIRE SAFETY

**Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold):** I have a petition that's addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It reads:

"Firefighters need speed, experience and teamwork to save lives. I oppose any legislation that could undermine the work of my local firefighters and jeopardize fire safety in my community. Please listen to professional firefighters and amend Bill 84 to eliminate the threat to fire safety."

It's signed by Harry Fuchs of Burlington, by Ian Jones of Puslinch and by so many others, as well as by myself.

### MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

**Mr John O'Toole (Durham East):** In all respect to the member for Scarborough Centre, the Honourable Dan Newman, who is now attending the hearings on Bill 103, I present this petition to the Legislature of Ontario.

"Whereas the city of Scarborough is requiring individuals who want to participate in the mail-in referendum to provide their name, address and signature on the ballot; and

"Whereas this requirement is blatantly undemocratic and threatens the legitimacy of the democratic process; and

"Whereas the city of Scarborough makes no mention as to whether or not it will accept ballots from residents who wish to vote in confidence; and

"Whereas the question on the ballot itself is slanted towards the position of the city and cannot be viewed as a neutral question; and

"Whereas this uncertainty and undemocratic procedure makes the entire process a great misuse of taxpayers' dollars and tarnishes any results that will come out of the vote;

"Therefore be it resolved that we, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario to (1) speak out against this undemocratic vote, (2) disregard the results of the vote, and (3) continue the proposed unification of the municipalities into one unified city of Toronto."

I'm pleased to sign my name in support.

**Mr Mike Colle (Oakwood):** I've got a petition here saying:

"Stop Megacity Madness: Citizens Have Democratic Right to be Heard."

"To the Legislature of Ontario:

"Whereas 'bigger government is not better' and the Mike Harris government has no right to dictate a megacity upon the citizens of Metro Toronto; and

"Whereas the megacity is being imposed on 2.3 million citizens in Metro Toronto without giving people a voice in the future of their cities and neighbourhoods; and

"Whereas a megacity could lead to mega property tax increases, mega user fees and mega cuts in services; and

"Whereas the Tories never proposed abolishing local government in favour of bigger government during the election campaign;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario as follows:

"To give the 2.3 million people in Metro Toronto a say in the future of their cities and stop the imposition of a megacity."

I affix my name to this petition.

1510

### CHILD CARE

**Mr Rosario Marchese (Fort York):** I've got a petition here from Centro Clinton Daycare. They appeared in my office a few days ago during the Valentine's Day campaign.

This petition is addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It reads:

"We, the undersigned parents at Centro Clinton Daycare, are concerned about the Ontario government's proposed changes to child care and the elimination of support for junior kindergarten.

"Why is Ontario's child care system being dismantled by the provincial government?"

"Why are Ontario's young children the target of irresponsible cuts to child care?"

"Quality child care for young children benefits everyone.

"Government action required:

"The provincial government must reassess the impact of its policies on young children and restore operating and capital funding for early childhood education programs. The provincial government must take the advice of every disentanglement task force and recognize that property taxes cannot support vital social services."

I fully support this petition.

### MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

**Mr John L. Parker (York East):** I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It reads as follows:

"Whereas the borough of East York is requiring voters in the current mail-in referendum to return their ballots in envelopes bearing their names and addresses; and

"Whereas the ballots are to be forwarded to the borough of East York at the East York Civic Centre and not to an independent elections commission; and

"Whereas the East York council has declared itself in favour of a particular result in the referendum; and



"Whereas the question itself is prejudicial in its wording and clearly slanted towards the result favoured by council; and

"Whereas all of the above factors violate well-established and universally acknowledged principles of a free democratic referendum process;

"Therefore, be it resolved that we, the undersigned, petition the Ontario Legislature to:

"(1) Speak out against the current flawed, undemocratic referendum in East York;

"(2) Disregard the results of the vote; and

"(3) Proceed with the government's program to provide for Toronto's future through the creation of one Toronto for all of us."

### BIBLIOTHÈQUES PUBLIQUES

**M. Jean-Marc Lalonde (Prescott et Russell) :** J'ai ici une pétition des Amis de la bibliothèque d'Alfred aux membres de l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario :

«Étant donné que nous croyons fermement que la responsabilité provinciale dans les bibliothèques publiques en Ontario est un droit fondamental de tous les Ontariens et toutes les Ontariennes ;

«Nous, les soussignés, demandons aux membres de l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario de sauvegarder la responsabilité provinciale dans les bibliothèques publiques en s'assurant de maintenir ce qui suit :

«(1) Les subventions provinciales qui permettent d'assurer à tous les Ontariens et à toutes les Ontariennes un accès équitable aux documents et aux services de bibliothèque publique ;

«(2) La coordination des programmes de partage des ressources tels que le système de prêt entre bibliothèques et l'accès au réseau Internet ;

«(3) Une politique permettant d'assurer l'existence du réseau des bibliothèques publiques de l'Ontario ;

«(4) L'aide directe de la part du gouvernement provincial au niveau du service, par exemple par l'entremise du Service des bibliothèques de l'Ontario-Sud et du Service des bibliothèques de l'Ontario du Nord ;

«(5) Une loi maintenant l'autonomie des conseils d'administration des bibliothèques publiques.»

J'y ajoute ma signature.

### OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

**Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre):** I have a petition from the United Steelworkers of America, and in fact the director of district 6 of the United Steelworkers of America for health and safety and WCB, Nancy Hutchison, is in the House here with us today. The petition reads as follows:

"Whereas the Harris government has begun a process to open the Occupational Health and Safety Act of Ontario; and

"Whereas this act is the single most important piece of legislation for working people since it is designed to protect our lives, safety and health while at work and

allow us to return home to our families in the same condition in which we left; and

"Whereas the government has made it clear that they intend to water down the act and weaken the rights of workers under the law, including the right to know, the right to participate and especially the right to refuse unsafe work; and

"Whereas this government has already watered down proper training of certified committee members;

"Therefore, we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario not to alter the Occupational Health and Safety Act or erode the rights of workers any further and ensure strict enforcement of the legislation."

I add my name to theirs in support.

### MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

**Mr John L. Parker (York East):** I have a petition to deliver here on behalf of my friend and colleague the member for Don Mills. It reads as follows:

"We, the undersigned, residents of East York, are in favour of the borough of East York remaining as a separate municipality."

### FIRE SAFETY

**Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines):** I have the following petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas Bill 84 undermines the firefighting system that all Ontarians rely on; and

"Whereas Bill 84 puts communities at risk by jeopardizing fire safety; and

"Whereas Bill 84 allows the understaffing of fire halls and emergency vehicles even though coroners' inquests have repeatedly found that response time is critical to saving lives; and

"Whereas Bill 84 encourages added bureaucracy in the fire services where none has ever been needed, even though the fire marshal says the current system encourages teamwork; and

"Whereas Bill 84 was introduced without consultation with firefighters despite the Premier's explicit commitment to consult before any changes took place;

"We, the undersigned, urge the government of Ontario to listen to professional firefighters and protect fire safety for Ontarians. We call on the government to delete the many sections of Bill 84 that undermine emergency response and put communities at risk."

I affix my signature as I'm in complete agreement. I hand this petition to Lucas Parafianowicz of St Ann Elementary School in St Catharines.

**Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold):** I've got a petition and it's headlined boldly, "Speed, Experience and Teamwork Save Lives: Don't Get Burned by Bill 84." It's addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It reads:

"Firefighters need speed, experience and teamwork to save lives. I oppose any legislation that could undermine



the work of my local firefighters and jeopardize fire safety in my community. Please listen to professional firefighters and amend Bill 84 to eliminate the threat to fire safety."

That's signed by Norah Sykes of Oakville, by Cynthia Nash of Oakville and by Lucy Pickering also of Oakville, and a whole lot of other people.

#### MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

**Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands):** I have a petition here.

"Stop Megacity Madness: Citizens Have Democratic Right to be Heard."

"To the Legislature of Ontario:

"Whereas 'bigger government is not better' and the Mike Harris government has no right to dictate a megacity upon the citizens of Metro Toronto; and

"Whereas the megacity is being imposed on 2.3 million citizens in Metro Toronto without giving people a voice in the future of their cities and neighbourhoods; and

"Whereas a megacity could lead to mega property tax increases, mega user fees and mega cuts in services; and

"Whereas the Tories never proposed abolishing local government in favour of bigger government during the election campaign;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario as follows:

"Give the 2.3 million people in Metro Toronto a say in the future of their cities and stop the imposition of a megacity."

I have affixed my signature to it.

#### WORKERS' COMPENSATION

**Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre):** I have a petition from the United Food and Commercial Workers, the Canadian Auto Workers, CUPE and OPSEU. It reads as follows:

"To Save Workers' Compensation.

"To Premier Harris and the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"We, the undersigned, oppose your government's plan to dismantle the workers' compensation system including reducing benefits; excluding claims for repetitive strain injuries, muscle injuries, strains, sprains, stress, harassment and most occupational diseases; eliminating pension supplements; handing over control of our claims to our employers for the first four to six weeks after injury; privatizing WCB to large insurance companies; integrating sick benefits into WCB; eliminating or restricting the Workers' Compensation Appeals Tribunal, WCAT; including eliminating worker representation on the board and eliminating the bipartite WCB board of directors.

"Therefore, we demand a safe workplace, compensation if we are injured, no reduction in benefits, improved re-employment and vocational rehabilitation, an independent appeal structure with worker representation, access to the office of the worker adviser, that the WCAT be left intact and that the WCB bipartite board of directors be reinstated."

On behalf of my caucus colleagues, I add my name to theirs.

1520

#### ORDERS OF THE DAY

##### WATER AND SEWAGE SERVICES IMPROVEMENT ACT, 1997

##### LOI DE 1997 SUR L'AMÉLIORATION DES SERVICES D'EAU ET D'ÉGOUT

Resuming the adjourned debate on the motion for second reading of Bill 107, An Act to enact the Municipal Water and Sewage Transfer Act, 1997 and to amend other acts with respect to water and sewage / *Projet de loi 107, Loi visant à édicter la Loi de 1997 sur le transfert des installations d'eau et d'égout aux municipalités et modifiant d'autres lois en ce qui a trait à l'eau et aux eaux d'égout.*

**The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson):** Further debate? The Chair recognizes the member for Etobicoke-Rexdale.

**Mr John Hastings (Etobicoke-Rexdale):** I'm very delighted to join with colleagues in the House in debating Bill 107, dealing with the transfer of responsibilities for water and sewage facility improvements to the municipalities and a clearer realigned role for both the provincial government, that is, the Ministry of Environment and Energy, and the municipalities with respect to this very important service to the people of Ontario.

Up until the present time, the basic role of municipalities in water treatment and sewage facilities was one whereby the municipalities were the agents of the Ministry of Environment and Energy. We believe, as a government, that that particularly confused role needs to be straightened out. That is the fundamental rationale for Bill 107: to establish a clear line of responsibility as to who has what role; what the municipalities will do, what the Ministry of Environment and Energy will do.

In that new arrangement, starting in October of this year, you will see the same objectives that are carried out now in a clearer, more clarified context. That is to say, we are going to shift the remaining 25% of water treatment and sewage facilities to the municipalities. As a government, we fundamentally believe this is a responsibility that those municipalities that understand how to carry it out and have requested this transfer will do the best job, because we believe this kind of service is carried out more effectively if it's carried out by the level of local government that is closest to the people. In that sense, that is the role of the municipalities.

On the other hand, the clarified new role of the Ministry of Environment and Energy will be one to deal with the regulation and enforcement of clear, challenging standards. That's where the ministry will place its most clear and adequate resources for this service. Then we will have a clear understanding in people's minds who provides the service, which partner, and which agency is responsible for enforcement of very clear and tough standards.

I think it's interesting to review some of the notes made by members of the opposition parties regarding this very significant realignment of governmental responsibilities.



For example, in earlier remarks made this month by the member for Oakwood, the member for Oakwood was asking the question, "How are the municipalities going to carry out these additional burdens?" That clearly indicates, when you go through his remarks, that the member for Oakwood, and the member for Lawrence particularly, have failed to understand one of the new elements that has appeared on the governmental scene in the role of responsibilities for water and sewage treatment.

When the member for Lawrence, which I want to correct instead of the member for Oakwood, asked that question the other day, he obviously hasn't remembered or he has forgotten conveniently that one of the key ways of carrying out the transfer of this responsibility is that the municipalities can be the steerers of policy instead of the rowers of service, if you want to use a naval metaphor. That is to say, municipalities up till now have basically been the operators of the service and reported, on an "Aye, aye" basis, to the Ministry of Environment and Energy.

In the new-focus Bill 107, municipalities will now have an opportunity, and I think it will be a tremendous opportunity, to deal with new partners if they so choose under what I would call a public sector-private sector partnership. That is to say, municipalities may want to retain control and ownership of a water or sewage treatment facility but they may want to set out in very strict, clear guidelines a request for proposal for an operator to come in and look after the day-to-day operations of that facility if the municipality's council deems that this would be in the best interests of the folks of that municipality.

That isn't going to apply to everybody, but it will apply to a good number of municipalities that the opposition do not mention as to why they would want to have any shift of responsibilities. They want to keep the old style of thinking in place, that the Ministry of Environment not only be the policy rower but also the steerer. They want to be in a situation where the ministry can be all things to all people instead of clarifying the existing confusion.

If you look at a list of municipalities that have requested the transfer, I find one on the list that is most interesting, and that is the village of Chalk River. The member for Pembroke north has been asking in this House and also has made note through conversations to the ministry as to why the village of Chalk River can't get on with operating its own water facility.

A question emerges, unfortunately, and that deals with the whole situation of OCWA, the new crown agency that the previous government set up. OCWA became a crown corporation fundamentally for the purposes of offsetting financial problems of the previous government in its accounting. What they said was, "Let's create a new crown operation and we'll offset the costs and liabilities for water and treatment facilities right off the books of the consolidated revenue statement." And they set up — guess what? — another great bureaucratic operation. So we have in the instance of the village of Chalk River a clear example of where that particular municipality wants to get on with doing what it has done best, which is operate a water facility and provide clear standards for

drinking water for the people of Chalk River. But guess what? It can't do it because OCWA stands in the way when it comes to the termination of the contract. There is no setoff date in that contract that OCWA had established with Chalk River and many other municipalities throughout Ontario, which prohibits them from getting on with doing their job.

Here we have a clear example of a crown agency that was set up to be an offset for fiscally deceptive purposes, in my estimation, whereby the agency itself has blocked a municipality from being able to provide the service which it deems appropriate for the people of its area, in this case the village of Chalk River. They are now trying to figure out a way of setting off a termination date in the contract, but OCWA, as I understand it, is saying, "Well, we might do that, but you folks are going to have to pay for the cost of the offset."

There are numerous other examples of this kind of situation within the operations of water and sewage treatment facilities in Ontario. I could go through a list not only of the smaller municipalities but also of the mid-sized, even many urban areas such as the city of Sarnia, which is very interested in getting on with the job of operating its own water and sewage treatment facility.

1530

We have often heard from the folks from the other side that doing this at all is very dangerous, that it's going to create all kinds of problems. If you just followed the old style of thinking, as the member for St Catharines always reiterates around here, if you simply banned any kind of flexibility in terms of operation with the private sector or with even another public sector partner, we'll keep the old arrangement because that's the best, where the Ministry of Environment is at the top of the pyramid and they bestow their knowledge and standards down on to the municipalities. You can see it in other remarks of not only the member for St Catharines but the member for Hamilton East and the member for Lawrence, whereby they are intimating or alluding to the fact that the municipal governments lack the expertise in many areas of being able to operate their own water or sewage treatment facility and that the ministry will not provide any kind of assistance in terms of training and supervision, which I believe is not the case at all.

What we need to be doing is moving away from this old style of thinking and trying to create a new environment for public-private partnerships in Ontario. For example, in my own area, the Humber arboretum is a multiparty arrangement creating a nature facility within the city of Etobicoke using the city of Etobicoke, the Metropolitan Toronto Conservation Authority, Metro Toronto and Humber College, which all came together in a four-way partnership many years ago to create a tremendous, almost secretive area, because it wasn't well known until the last few years, where people in the area could go and visit and see nature at its best, not only old-forest growth but also the new horticultural design gardens.

This particular facility, Humber arboretum, is working very hard with a private sector partner to develop horticultural advice and a design for a proposed retirement community within the greater Toronto area. This is the



sort of facility, this is the kind of partnership, that we ought to be encouraging with the municipalities. I use that only as an example. If the municipalities can be the guider and provider of policy and the standard setter consistent with what the Ministry of Environment and Energy is attempting to undertake in this new legislation, then let's by all means allow municipal governments that are responsible, that know how to deal with the issues of water treatment — because in many, many instances, municipalities already have expertise of an engineering variety in place to protect the drinking water for the people of those different communities.

So I am completely in agreement with the objectives of this bill in terms of creating a more flexible environment, instead of hearing the old-style thinking which we get from across the way, which is essentially that the only way you can operate and protect people in terms of environmental protection is the old hierarchical, pyramidal approach to organization, and in providing service delivery on this vital issue, you have to have sort of the old Soviet command economy and the municipalities salute whenever the water inspectors come around to determine whether they are following those standards.

I think in this particular arrangement of new legislation, this government is undoubtedly exhibiting a stronger trust element in terms of how municipalities can get on with serving their people, their citizens, in water quality for the province of Ontario. This bill is going to provide the fundamental means of getting there, rather than relying on the old-style approach of the two opposition parties that bring up the old word of "privatization" and other things that scare the hell out of people but don't look at how privatization, if it is done at all, keeps control of the facility in the hands of the municipal government and allows an operator to provide the day-to-day service under very strict monitoring. That's a very strange and bizarre sort of proposal that especially the leader and the Liberals across the way have denounced in many instances. It has in many other fields ended up costing Canada thousands of jobs that we could have had, particularly in one area, airport construction. We have lost out in that particular area in terms of expertise.

I see in this bill the very seeds of new beginnings for utilizing engineering expertise and public-private partnerships to be able to sell that kind of expertise and knowledge to other places in the world which are crying for top-quality water. You can't provide that kind of an arrangement if you utilize the old, pyramidal, hierarchical approach which the Liberal Party over the years has advocated. I see through the remarks of the various folks from across the way who have spoken on this bill. It can't seem to penetrate their minds that there just might be another way. What they're involved in is clearly trying to confuse the issue instead of delineating what the potential would be in terms of assisting the municipalities in getting on with the job.

Let me just add that this bill achieves results and that's what we're going to get: clear, consistent results using the Ministry of Environment and Energy's clear guidelines, and a new, flexible environment for arrangements of public-private partnerships between municipalities or

what have you in terms of getting on with the job and achieving results for the future citizens of this province.

**The Acting Speaker:** Questions or comments?

**Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands):** I find it very interesting to listen to the member opposite talk about a Soviet command economy, particularly when we're talking about water and sewer plants. He forgets that most of these arrangements, indeed probably all of these arrangements, were set up and financed during the period of time that we had 42 years of Conservative rule up until 1985. That was your model, sir, that we're talking about. It was your model that created these ownership situations and that caused these problems.

With respect to the new partnership, there is no new partnership here. You as a government are saying to the municipalities, "You will own these plants, the 25% that aren't municipally owned right now, whether you like it or not." You tend to forget, particularly in these situations where the province got involved, that happened in cases where local municipalities simply did not have the taxing capacity and did not have the financial ability to build these plants. If it had not been for the provincial government in those days stepping in and building these water and sewer plants, it could very well be that there still would be areas in the province right now that wouldn't have these facilities available.

It is very easy for the government now to step away from all that responsibility and say: "All right, we no longer want to be burdened with the financial burden that a lot of these plants still carry. We're unloading it on to municipalities." The most cynical part about it is the fact that the municipalities have absolutely no choice as to whether or not they take over ownership of these facilities.

It may very well be, as the member has stated, that there may be some municipalities that in their particular case want some of these plants deeded over to them, but there are also municipalities that don't want that to happen. What this legislation clearly does, it forces this on to municipalities whether they like it or not, and that we find very objectionable.

**The Acting Speaker:** The member for Etobicoke-Rexdale has two minutes to respond.

**Mr Hastings:** Thank you, Speaker, for my two minutes' response. Let me just say to the member for Kingston and The Islands that I acknowledge it's true that the provincial government originally was responsible for creating that. That's a fact of life; one doesn't deny reality. But on the other hand, the member for Kingston and The Islands probably wouldn't accept, as I heard in his remarks, that there's no such thing as a partnership here.

1540

If he's read the legislation at all and he's heard what the minister had to say and he's listened to other remarks of members in the House, especially the parliamentary assistant — the member for Northumberland had said earlier that there is the potential here for creating public-private partnerships, that municipalities can join with other municipalities in the way in which they can operate or finance their infrastructure for sewage and water treatment or they can perhaps find another private sector



partner whereby the folks across the way have said — I heard the member for St Catharines explicitly point out that we ought to ban any kind of private sector ventures with —

**Hon Rob Sampson (Minister without Portfolio [Privatization]):** What?

**Mr Hastings:** Yes — the municipalities because of the fearmongering of the folks across the way. They couldn't make a business case for a private-public partnership.

I heard the member two weeks ago clearly point out that we should be doing a ban, not requiring, as it is in the legislation, that where a municipality decides to hook up with another partner for the continuation of clear water quality, the 25% capital cost of the loans and the interest has to be repaid to the province, to the provincial treasury, which was simply a built-in financial protection for this government, as you would want. No, you said, "Ban them," ban good new thinking. I can't believe you'd reject innovation.

**The Acting Speaker:** Further debate? The Chair recognizes the member for Kingston and The Islands.

**Mr Gerretsen:** In his two-minute response the member at one time started saying that we were somehow against municipalities banding together to run these facilities. Let me make it quite clear: We're not against municipalities banding together because it's already happening in many parts of the province.

**Mr Hastings:** You banned that.

**Mr Gerretsen:** We did not. We've never said that. Private sector is something totally different. We believe that the quality of our drinking water supply in this province should be sacrosanct and we certainly want to make sure that the proper inspections take place and that municipalities have the ability to look after it.

But let me start once again: If the member really believes in all of these new partnerships, I would like him to explain to me at the appropriate time why he feels it is necessary for the province to pass legislation which in effect forces these facilities on local municipalities, whether they want to in their particular case or not. The legislation is quite clear when it states that the water and sewage treatment plants which are currently owned by the province will be transferred to municipalities. It doesn't say "may"; it says "will" be transferred to municipalities.

Again, we ought to remember that about 25%, I understand, of all the water and sewer plants are presently owned by the province. They were all in situations where the local municipalities simply would not have had the financial capacity to build these plants on their own accord. That basically is what government is all about. We live in a large province. I suppose when we first started, 150 years ago, there were certain elements in which government was involved and one of those elements was that it was going to help to provide services in those areas of the province where municipalities simply weren't able to deliver those kind of services or weren't able to pay for those services or didn't have enough of a taxing capacity to look after those services. That's what government is all about.

If the members opposite are saying that we're completely stepping aside from that and every municipality, not only in this area but in many other areas, will just

have to make it on their own, then I think that we in this province are going to have a situation not too long in the future where we're going to have all sorts of different standards, whether we're talking about water and sewer capacity or quality, whether we're talking about social housing situations, whether we're talking about social welfare standards etc, that are going to be totally different from place to place.

Quite frankly, I don't see that that's the kind of society I would like to envision for the province of Ontario. I think we have to realize that this is another part of the downloading exercise on local municipalities. We have a whole list here, as we've indicated a number of times before, but I think it bears repeating, because I think the people of Ontario should clearly understand that merely because the education costs are taken off the residential property tax roll, there are a number of other costs being added on.

According to the ministry's own calculation, \$5.4 billion in education residential tax burden is being taken off the property tax roll. Fine, I say; that's good. There may be some other arguments as to why the province should not be in complete control of the entire education system, but if that's what they want to — that's the only message that they've sent out so far to the people of Ontario.

They haven't talked about the \$6.3 billion that they're adding on to the property tax roll, and according to our calculations, a good \$100 million of that is in the sewer and water transfer; \$100 million is being transferred, particularly to those municipalities that will be least able to afford it, the smaller municipalities in this province, which won't have any say as to whether or not they want to get involved in this program. I have some concerns about that, and of course those are the kinds of concerns that have been raised in this House over the last month and a half.

It's interesting that there are a number of other areas as well that we've heard very little about. When we look at the idea of social housing, for example, and we look at the transfer of \$890 million to the local municipalities in public housing and in social housing, and in many cases where these municipalities simply will not be able to absorb that, this is the concern that people have out there.

A week ago last Friday, we had some hearings in Kingston at which about 25 different groups made presentations with respect to how this downloading legislation is going to affect them. These weren't all municipalities. These were groups of individual citizens, they were social service providers, they were social housing providers. We heard from library boards etc.

One of the interesting presentations that we were given that day was done on behalf of the VON in Kingston. Their particular presentation dealt with maintaining the levels of care for senior citizens. They did some statistical work across the province of Ontario. It's very interesting, the statistics that they came up with.

One of the more interesting ones dealt with the fact that over the next 20 to 25 years, the number of school-age children or people involved in the school system is going to rise, but the amount of growth is going to be substantially less than the growth in the population of



people 65 years of age and over. As a matter of fact, between now and the year 2011, they predict the growth in the school-age population to be somewhere around 9%, and then it levels down to about 2%, whereas during the same period of time the population aged 65 and over will increase by 55% by the year 2011.

What does all that mean? What it means is that over the next 20 years or so we can certainly expect a levelling off of the educational requirements, because the number of people who will be going into the educational system or will be part of the educational system will be quite a bit fewer, or at least not at as high a rate of increase, than people requiring social and health care services in this province.

What's behind this entire transfer, taking education taxes off and putting all these social services on to the property tax roll, of course is the notion that there will be greater pressures on municipalities in the years to come to provide these services. There will be much greater needs for dollars in order to make sure that the senior citizen population or the aging population of Ontario will have those services available to them.

I view this whole transfer somewhat cynically, because I know that the government can probably score some points with the notion that, "Yes, we're taking education off the property tax roll," and I'm sure that this is popular in some circles. Unfortunately, the people out there have no idea as yet how it's going to affect the property taxes they're going to be paying next year and the year after that because of the onloading of these social service costs. Let's just run through those costs again.

1550

This water and sewer aspect, that's referred to in Bill 107, is an integral part of that, because I've already indicated that's \$100 million.

In community policing, for example, \$180 million is being added on to the property tax system, and it's going to be done particularly in the smaller municipalities, which right now get free OPP service. The OPP, I take it, is going to send a bill once a year to these smaller municipalities and say, "You owe us that for policing your communities." I think the property taxpayers in smaller communities in Ontario ought to be made aware of that.

How about the farm tax rebate system? That's going to cost \$165 million. That will now come out of the local property tax payment system. Again, what kind of municipalities are we talking about? We're basically talking about the rural, more agricultural counties and townships in this province. Those taxpayers in those municipalities are going to have to pay that amount.

We already talked earlier about the property assessment services, where basically we're taking the assessment people who work for the provincial government and we're transferring that function, and hopefully some of the personnel as well, on to the local level. That's going to cost the local taxpayers \$120 million.

Social housing: \$890 million, as I mentioned earlier. This is a huge cost. In a lot of these situations, the municipalities were not involved in any of the arrangements that were struck between the province and the

social housing providers in each municipality. Basically, municipal councils are just going to be told, "From now on, those contracts that we signed, whereby we agreed to subsidize the social housing in your community to a number of different groups etc, that's going to be your cost, local council." That's a cost that we all know, from figures that were presented here earlier this week in the House, is going to rise substantially. It has gone from something like \$200 million to \$300 million in the early 1980s to \$890 million right now, and it will grow even further, because there are many more of these housing units available than there were five or 10 years ago.

The other one, of course, is ambulance services. I would dare say that most municipalities have not been involved with ambulance services at all over the last number of years. This is a brand-new responsibility that's going to be downloaded on municipalities.

Homes for special care: \$25 million.

Community ferries: \$15 million. This, of course, is one that is of extreme interest to me because, as the members of the House may know, I represent a riding that has about four ferries that go to three different islands.

**Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma):** That's F-E-R-R-I-E-S.

**Mr Gerretsen:** That's F-E-R-R-I-E-S, that's right. This is a major concern to the people who live on Wolfe Island and Howe Island and Amherst Island. These communities, which have tax bases of about 100,000 to 300,000 at most — in other words, that's all they collect in local taxes — are going to have to somehow find the anywhere from \$1 million to \$2.4 million about which the province has basically said: "Look, we're no longer responsible for that. Here basically is the ferry, here it is, and now you operate it."

The Premier here in the House, as a matter of fact, made the statement one day when I questioned him on it that there will be other taxation sources available to those municipalities so that they can pay for the ferries' subsidy services, which is absolute nonsense, because there is no way those municipalities can raise the kind of taxes to pay for those services.

We can see how a lot of this downloading is affecting different municipalities in different ways. But the bottom line is — I know in this House we've paid an awful lot of attention to how it affects the larger municipalities; I can tell you that as far as we are concerned it will affect the smaller municipalities even more, because their taxing capacity is so much less than the larger municipalities.

We also know, from the independent studies that have been done by the different treasurers in the different municipalities, that they have already come to the conclusion that this is going to significantly increase their need for money from the local taxpayers.

I'd like to correct a statement that I myself made. About a week or two ago I stated that in my own city's case, \$23 million in more taxes was estimated to be required by the city as a result of the downloading upon municipalities. I was wrong in that, because last Friday we heard from our mayor and our chief administrator officer that the amount is \$29.6 million. That is the difference between the amount of money that will be required from taking the education taxes off the property tax roll and adding on the new costs of the services that



are provided by all of this mega-legislation that has been brought down for the last six weeks — \$29.6 million on a total budget of approximately \$100 million.

Now that is not being put together on some sort of partisan basis by a political party or a political group. Those are the independent figures that have been arrived at by a highly respected CAO and treasurer and mayor of our community who are not in any way at all politicizing this particular situation, and that's just one example. The city of Brantford, \$23 million more will have to be obtained from the local taxpayer; the city of London, \$57 million; the city of Cornwall, \$10 million; the city of Thunder Bay, \$15 million; Timmins, \$12 million; Peterborough, \$13 million; region of Sudbury, \$105 million, and we can just go on and on.

It is not that we are against change; it is that we are against the reckless kind of change that this government is wreaking on the people of Ontario.

We had a meeting today with the clerks-treasurers of the Association of Municipal Clerks and Treasurers of Ontario and they openly admitted that, first of all, they have no idea as to what's going to happen with respect to the assessment system for next year. They have absolutely no idea how they can possibly get ready for all these changes that are being contemplated right now.

They also totally agreed with me, by the way, that many of the smaller municipalities which are going to be given these water and sewer plants that we're talking about in Bill 107 — how they'll be able to handle the financing of them. Remember, if it's a good deal for a municipality and if some municipalities want this to happen, then let it happen, but there are also many municipalities that simply don't want these plants. As I mentioned before, the legislation makes it quite clear that all of these plants are going to be downloaded on municipalities whether they like it or not. If the government feels so assured of its position that this is something that all of the municipalities wanted, why don't they just make it optional?

We of course believe that this is — is the clock running on this or not?

*Interjection.*

**Mr Gerretsen:** All right. Thank you. I was hoping maybe we'd changed the rules and we would go back to the old rules and we could talk about these issues, which are extremely important to the people of Ontario, for as long as we needed to talk about them. We all know that we wouldn't be able to satisfy that by 6 o'clock this evening, or perhaps even for the next two or three weeks, because these are the issues that the people of Ontario care about. They don't want to pay more in their property taxes. They don't want to get a few dollars more in a so-called income tax cut, which we all know is going to favour the rich and famous substantially, those people who are making \$100,000 or more, whereas the average person is going to get a few dollars more in their pocket but they're going to pay — what? — \$530, \$600 more in property taxes next year. So we could really talk about this as long as we wanted. I appreciate it, Mr Speaker, if perhaps this is sort of a Speaker's edict that you rule that we could talk about this as long as we want, because it certainly needs to be talked about.

You know, there are organizations and individuals throughout this entire country and province that have spoken out against this mega-legislation that we've seen here.

Let's take a look at what Mr George Fierheller, who's president of the Metro Toronto board of trade, said. I can't think of a more responsible organization, from an economic and financial viewpoint and from the economic community in Toronto, than the Toronto board of trade. What do they say about what this government's doing about all this downloading legislation? He said, "They've got this one wrong. Moving social services costs to municipalities is not logical, not sensible, not reasonable." So how can it be done?

1600

This is presumably an organization that backs the government in most aspects, but they're saying this is totally wrong. We know that with every study that's ever been done, by either right-wing thinkers or left-wing thinkers, they've all come to one conclusion: You cannot fund health and social services out of a regressive tax system like the property tax system. You need to do that out of an income tax system that is progressive, so that the more people make, the more they pay, in effect. You cannot do that out of the property tax system.

What does Moody's of Canada, the bond rating service, state? I'm sure we're all very concerned about what they say about what's happening here. It states, "Municipalities may find it necessary to make significant adjustments to property taxes which could ultimately result in a less competitive tax regime."

If there is anything I would have thought would have made an impression on this government, more than the reasoning that may be put forth by anybody else, it is Moody's of Canada. We're concerned about the bond rating they have for this province. It states, "Municipalities may find it necessary to make significant adjustments to property taxes which could ultimately result in a less competitive" situation. That is pretty damning of this whole regime and the way it's gone about introducing these changes.

The government's own Who Does What committee is headed by that eminent former mayor of the city of Toronto, David Crombie, certainly a gentleman who is highly regarded I think by all political parties, and a man who certainly has been quite a force here in the city of Toronto.

What does he say? This is the government's own commission that it set up in determining how all these various funding changes should take place. He states: "Shifting social services to municipalities is both wrong in principle and devastating in practice. How this can be called disentanglement is an impressive stretch of definition."

He goes on, "I don't think there's a soul left standing that actually agrees with them," meaning the government, meaning the minister of privatization and the minister of industry and economic development who are both in the House right now. He says: "I don't think there's a soul left standing that actually agrees with them. In our final report, we wanted to make sure people understood that burdening municipalities with the cost of social services



was absolutely the wrong thing to do. The only way that municipalities can deal with any increasing welfare caseload or any long-term care is either to cut services or to raise taxes, which either means you're going to hit the poor or drive out business. This is not appropriate public policy." That's from the government's own commission.

The people of Ontario ought to be made aware of that because that is really where it's at. One of two things will happen: Either we're going to increase taxes at the local level or services are going to be cut. Mr Speaker, you and I know, being former municipal politicians, what the local councils will do. They are responsible and they're basically going to try to keep the tax load, any tax increase, as small as possible. What's going to happen is that services are going to be cut, and maybe they'll be the hard-core services that are provided in a municipality, but there may also be cuts in the welfare services to municipalities and some of the other programs, such as the social housing programs.

That really I think leaves most people somewhat upset, because what we're going to have within our communities is one group of people fighting with another group of people, namely, the taxpayers that don't want to pay any more, and they may very well take it out against the less fortunate in our society who are probably in the worst position to defend themselves.

What that will lead to, because it was already intimated here earlier in the House this week, is will there be different standards of providing, for example, social services or welfare rates and welfare services in our province? Will they be different from municipality to municipality?

It's something I'm concerned about, because if that were to happen, the most vulnerable in our society — to whom it's very easy to say, "Go and get a job," but we all know that in Ontario we have lost 37,000 jobs compared to the same time last year. That was in one of the government's own reports. We were the only province in Canada, as a matter of fact, that had fewer people working now than it did a year ago. We lost 37,000 jobs in this province. Those statistics came out earlier this week. It's very easy to say, "Go and get a job," but we all know the jobs aren't out there because we have over half a million people who are unemployed in this province.

What's going to happen then? We all know what's going to happen: It's going to pit one group in our community against another group. I've always believed that what government should be all about is to try as much as possible to level the playing field for people. Whether we're talking about health care services, and I think we would all agree we should be equally entitled to health care services, or whether we're talking about access to education, everyone should be able to go to school and learn to the best of their capability and economic factors should not play a role in that.

There's one other thing I just quickly want to say — this ties into this particular bill because people may be wondering out there, "What's all this got to do with Bill 107?" It's all tied in. Basically what Ontario is trying to do here once again is to unload a responsibility that Conservative governments in the past of John Robarts, of Bill Davis, had taken on on behalf of those people in

Ontario who couldn't afford these kinds of services, and they're downloading it whether the municipalities want it or not.

For example, what's to happen to the inspection system and the enforcement system? The member from Etobicoke said earlier, "We'll leave that up to the municipalities." I doubt very much that there are municipal employees around in all municipalities who are sufficiently well trained to be able to make sure that the kind of inspection and enforcement that is required for water and sewer services will be adequately done. We are concerned that they simply don't have sufficient training to adequately inspect new septic systems. That's not saying that municipal employees aren't hardworking. They just don't have the training or the capacity currently to look after these things.

The other thing which is very interesting, and it's just one of those minor little things, is that in Bill 26, and you may recall we talked about Bill 26 probably a year ago — for whatever reason, the government eliminated the need for municipalities to hold referendums before selling off water and other public utilities.

It's kind of interesting because this is all happening at the same time as we've got a committee here at the Legislature, headed by the member from Brampton, Mr Clement, taking a serious look at referenda — not only taking a serious look at them, but they want to institute referenda almost as by right, and that we should have a referendum held whenever the government feels like it should have a referendum.

Yet here in Bill 26 they have eliminated the need for municipalities to hold referenda before selling off water and other public utilities. It doesn't make a heck of a lot of sense to me to be promoting referenda legislation on the one hand and on the other hand saying, "No, but we're not going to have it when a municipality wants to sell off such important utilities as its water and sewer plants." I would have thought that if you're going to have any kind of referendum legislation at all, surely those are the areas where you want it, where in effect you're talking about selling off some of the main assets that a municipality may own.

1610

It's also interesting to note that the Ontario Municipal Water Association, which is a group that represents over 220 drinking water plants already owned by municipalities, is very concerned that municipalities will either want to sell off their plants or be forced to sell them off to cover the additional responsibilities that are dumped on them by this Tory government.

In October of last year the OMWA released a poll which showed that 75% of Ontarians supported the public ownership of the water systems. That's a rather significant number: Three out of four people strongly believe that this is one of the main things they wanted from government and they want it to remain in government ownership. Of course there's nothing in the bill, as the member from Etobicoke has already indicated, that prevents a municipality from selling off its water plants.

He can talk in generalities about partnerships, and I say to you, let the municipalities determine that. Let them determine whether or not they want to get involved in



these arrangements. Certainly I believe in municipal autonomy, but I also believe that a municipality should have the capacity to look after these facilities, and that certainly is not the case.

It's for these reasons that we cannot support this particular bill, and I would be more than pleased to answer any questions any of the members may have here.

**Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma):** I just want to congratulate my friend from Kingston and The Islands on his presentation on Bill 107. My main concern is similar to his with regard to this legislation, and that is the fact that, first, the government is forcing some very small municipalities that do not now own water and sewer plants that are within their borders serving their communities to take over those plants.

We recognize that the reason these very small municipalities don't own these plants — only about 25% of the plants in Ontario are in this situation — is because they were constructed by the government using almost completely provincial funds because those very small municipalities didn't have the wherewithal to raise the money to provide for the water and sewer facilities required to ensure that the residents had good, clean drinking water, something that we as Canadians tend to take for granted. That's number one.

Number two, my concern is that under Bill 107 there is nothing to prohibit municipalities that are facing a serious crunch financially because of the downloading by this government from privatizing those facilities and contracting out the ownership and operation of their water and sewer plants.

We all recognize the disastrous experience in the United Kingdom as a result of Thatcher's determination to privatize water in that jurisdiction. We now see higher rates, poorer reliability and serious problems with the delivery of good, clean water in Britain as a result of that experiment by the Thatcher government. We don't want to repeat those errors in Ontario.

**Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland):** It's a pleasure for once to rise in the House and recognize the member for Kingston and The Islands and agree with him that back in the 1950s there was the appropriate policy. That's when the Ontario Water Resources Act came in and OCWA came in to look after some of the problems of the 1950s and the 1960s. They built plants and brought them up to date, up to standards. Now we're there. We've matured and we're now into the 1990s and it's time to move along with new policy, and that's exactly what we're doing with new standards.

It's also interesting to note that Kingston, of which the member for Kingston and The Islands was the mayor once upon a time, was one of the last large cities to have a secondary treatment for their sewage plant. You'd think a city like Kingston, with all the dollars that are available from government, from penitentiaries to universities to hospitals to military bases and so on, would have been moving much quicker with him as a leader, as their mayor, looking after their city. I'm disappointed that he would drag on so long and have the province force him to get on with developing their sewage treatment plant. He should be ashamed of himself for leaving it to that point.

The member referred to the "may transfer" versus "will transfer" to the municipalities. I can tell you this government was following the request. We had 10% of those who didn't own their plants wanting them. Now it's up to 30% of the 230 plants that are asking to get the plants into their ownership and there are many others who would like to own those plants that you may not be aware of. Maybe before you start pushing that point, you should be aware of what the people out there really want. They want to own these plants.

**Mr Jean-Marc Lalonde (Prescott and Russell):** First of all, I'd like to congratulate my colleague the member for Kingston and The Islands. I'm really quite concerned about the fact that this government is talking of transferring the responsibility for 230 water and sewage plants to the municipalities.

I was just listening to my friend Dr Galt, the member for Northumberland. He says that from 1960 on, the government has been upgrading the plants. Let me tell you, I have in my own riding of Prescott and Russell some plants that don't even meet 50% of the standards that have been put in place by this government in the last year. The acceptable trihalomethane, for example, is 150 parts per million. I have a municipality where the THM is over 3,000 parts per million. This is the village of St Pascal, and it's your government in place at the present time that is working on this plant.

What is going to happen to the municipalities where these water plants are to be transferred to their responsibility? Are they going to have the same borrowing power? At the present time, indirectly the municipalities are paying for it, but at least they don't carry the debt on their financial reports. From that point on, from the day this is going to be transferred to the municipalities, the municipalities will have to take over the responsibility of this debt, which will eliminate a lot of them from having borrowing power to increase the water plant or to upgrade the water plant.

I think for this government it's very important that they look at it very closely before they decide to pass third reading.

**The Acting Speaker:** Comments and questions?

**Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold):** The member for Kingston and The Islands brings to this debate his expertise and experience as a mayor and his familiarity with the people in his riding and, I'm convinced, the people across Ontario. The response of government members is one of disdain, one of scorn, an abusive berating of the member for having qualifications to be here, for the fact that he's been involved in his community in an elected position for a number of years in a responsible position and has utilized that background to bring to the debate over Bill 107 some insights that the government members would simply rather not concern themselves with.

As the member for Algoma pointed out, our preoccupation with water and sewage isn't just a matter of convenience, and I appreciate that, yes, it's taken for granted; it's very much the hallmark of a civilized society. We're talking here about the health of communities. We're talking here about clean water so families can avoid the disease and scourges that accompanied days



when these types of services weren't permitted. This government wants to turn the clock back.

**Mr Peter L. Preston (Brant-Haldimand):** That's not true.

**Mr Kormos:** It does. This government wants to turn the clock back. I'm going to have a chance to speak on this bill and I've got a few other illustrations where this government wants to go back to times far less civilized than Ontario was before this government got elected. This government is wreaking devastation on municipalities across Ontario. They truly are Neanderthals and they are not serving their communities well. My only hope is that we can stop them before it's too late.

1620

**The Acting Speaker:** The member's time has expired. The member for Kingston and The Islands has two minutes.

**Mr Gerretsen:** I'd like to thank the members for Algoma, Welland-Thorold, Prescott and Russell, and Northumberland for their comments.

The first thing the member for Northumberland should understand is that when a member gets up and talks about a particular bill, it isn't always done from a self-interest viewpoint.

In the city of Kingston, we've owned our own facilities and our own plants for longer than I can remember, so we're not going to be affected by it one way or another. I am not talking about the larger municipalities which may very well have the financial capacity and the taxing power to look after these plants, because in most cases they already own them. I'm talking about the smaller municipalities that couldn't afford to build them in the first place because they didn't have the financial capacity. The province came in under some more enlightened governments of Robarts, even Frost and Drew and Davis, and said: "Look, we've got to do something for the people here. They are entitled to clean water. They are entitled to proper sewage facilities. We're going to build these plants and we're going to run them for them."

Those are the kinds of people and the kinds of communities I am talking about. You're now turning them over, the 25% that are still left, to those municipalities whether they like it or not. Sure, you've got a long list there. You've got a very long list of municipalities that want them. I say, if they want them, more power to them. But there are also municipalities out there that cannot afford to run these plants, and your legislation says they will be transferred to them, whether they like it or not.

If you're so sure about this being a good thing for all the municipalities, why don't you just leave it optional to them? If they don't want to run it themselves, if they want to be in a position whereby they want the province to continue to run those plants and pay for them and then charge back something to the municipalities, allow them to do that. But your legislation isn't doing that.

So come clean with the people of Ontario. You are downloading once again something on the people who are least able to pay it, namely, the smaller municipalities in Ontario.

**The Acting Speaker:** Further debate?

**Mr Kormos:** Here we are, and again I've got, as you know, about 30 minutes to address Bill 107. I have but

30 minutes. I intend to use every minute of those 30 minutes talking to Bill 107 and talking to the bill in the context of a legislative agenda that has been the most vicious, the most anti-family, the most anti-neighbourhood, the most anti-community agenda that this province has ever witnessed. We're looking at and witnesses to an agenda that's an all-out attack on the communities that people have struggled for generations to build: communities that people have made sacrifices for, communities that have been built around, yes, public institutions, public resources like public libraries, like public schools and public education and public hospitals, where, until this government began shutting them down, one could have access to quality health care regardless of whether one was rich, like the friends of this government, or a mere worker or a retiree, or indeed less than prosperous.

You know what's incredible, Speaker? I know that Speakers have remarked in their own minds to themselves, because of course Speakers can't speak, about the contradictions inherent in the titles of any number of bills that have come forward. Here we go again, and this is very scary stuff, that this government would somehow think that by mistitling this, along with so many other pieces of legislation, it's going to pull the wool over people's eyes. Bill 107, the Water and Sewage Services — am I reading this right, Speaker? Bill 107, the Water and Sewage Services Improvement Act? These people are not only attacking communities and families in those communities; this government's attacking the English language. This government is distorting the English language and misusing it in such a way that it thinks that the mistitling of this bill, like so many others, is going to somehow delude people into thinking this is anything akin to an improvement act, least of all of water and sewage services.

I've got to tell you, down in Welland-Thorold where I come from there's been a great deal of debate over the course of the last several years about the way municipalities charge for water. There's been a real struggle, for instance, in the city of Welland over the concept of water meters. The debate has been such that, with the public water supply system, there's effectively no shortage of water; with the public system, as it is, the regionally owned system, no shortage of water in Niagara region. The cost — well, it may have resulted in surcharges.

Let me tell you, the people in regional Niagara are going to face an additional property tax bill courtesy of this government to the tune of at least — these are just the numbers that are in to date — \$73 million. We're talking about the regional share of expenses. The folks in regional Niagara — Welland, Thorold, Pelham, St Catharines, every one of those communities — are going to have to cough up, for the regional portion alone, a bare-bones minimum, new money, new taxes of \$73 million, and the numbers haven't stopped coming in. That's the reality, not speculation. Those numbers are hard and fast, black and white: minimum \$73 million.

Retirees are going to have to cough up hundreds of dollars in new property taxes because of this government's downloading on to regional Niagara and every one of the municipalities within the region, and, quite frankly, every municipality across the province.



Think, my goodness, about those 576 towns and cities in Ontario, the vast majority of them small towns, 800 population, 1,000 population, that are going to be forced to pick up the tab for Ontario provincial policing. They're not going to be whacked just with the downloading that's across the board, there's going to be even more, because they're now going to be taxed by this government — that's what it is, that's what it amounts to — for Ontario provincial policing; over 500 communities, some 576, most of them small-town Ontario, a big chunk of them in the north, and many of them, like Muskoka, like Huntsville, like Collingwood, in areas that have exceptionally high seasonal policing costs, not because of the residential quality of their community but because of the flow of huge numbers of tourists who travel through there.

This government is all about either downloading or simply shutting down. Surely there's been some reflection on the part of some of the government members.

It knows that the abandonment of public libraries is going to mean that there are going to be a whole lot of small-town Ontario libraries shut down. Doors are going to be shut, windows are going to be papered over, and the kids, the young people who've relied upon those libraries as places to — one of the problems with more than a few people, and again, not to criticize, but for some of them it's been a long time since they've been in a public library, like the wonderful community library in Pelham, like Thorold's great community library and like the grand old building on King Street in Welland with its huge maple trees, the Welland Public Library.

These places are about books; of course they are, as they should be. They're also about knowledge that's not accessible in any other way. They're also about community activities. It's also about introducing little children into the world of research and fiction and history and community. And it's about giving seniors access to these same resources. I tell you, the two groups that use libraries to a large extent, perhaps greater than other groups, are young people, young students, especially at the elementary school level and to a certain extent at high school, and seniors, our folks.

Look at the things the library provides that seniors aren't going to get anywhere else, not unless they've got the big bucks, and increasingly seniors don't. They increasingly have to be more and more careful about how they budget their incomes based on pensions or some modest savings. Without public libraries — and that's the kind of Ontario these Tories have in mind: no public libraries. They'd shut them down in a New York minute. Access to the large-print books for older folks, or for even younger folks whose vision is not as good as it used to be or as it could be, is going to be gone; it's going to be abolished. Access to audiotapes — these are things libraries provide for free.

1630  
I remember my old grandmother. She's dead now. She was remarkable, because here's a lady whose first language wasn't English, who attended school, if at all, for a handful of days over in eastern Europe and who —

**Mr Galt:** On a point of order, Madam Speaker: Section 23(b), directing "his or her speech to matters

other than...the question under discussion." I wonder if we could start debating Bill 107.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley):** The member for Northumberland may have noticed I've just come into the chair, so I will listen carefully to the member and determine whether or not he's staying on course.

**Mr Kormos:** Thank you, Speaker. Anyway, here's my grandmother, worked all her life, simply wasn't literate in her own language, in her original language, couldn't read or write her own language, never went to school. Worked all of her life, worked in a small business. That's how they supported their family, like so many immigrants to this country. She was well into her 60s when she started to learn how to read. She started to learn in what was a charming and wonderful way, using books for young people.

As she became more excited about this new skill that she was slowly acquiring, her eyesight started to go. That left her in despair until she discovered the audiotapes from the Welland Public Library. She could listen to those and she could venture into worlds that she never dared imagine existed. I tell you, that was a liberation. It was a true revolution for an old lady who had worked all of her life and whose knuckles were gnarled and swollen with arthritis and whose memories were of but hard work and sacrifice, to be able to use a public library and access these sorts of resources.

**The Acting Speaker:** We are debating, as I've now discovered, Bill 107, sewer and water, not the public library bill. Although hearing stories about your grandmother is very interesting, and I mean no disrespect in that, I would ask you to come back, at least in broad terms, to the sewer and water bill.

**Mr Kormos:** Speaker, please, I wish you had been here, and I understand that you only just took the chair. We're talking here about public versus privately owned and we're talking about Bill 107 as being part of an overall agenda by this government to destroy the public resources and institutions that generations have built.

Speaker, how many times have I told you this? And I'm going to tell it to you again: Every bit of legislation that this government has presented, perhaps but for a couple, and I can't recall them, that might have been innocuous, and even then I'm suspicious, every piece of agenda, every bill that's been presented in this House, it's like I told you a couple of days ago, is like a piece of a puzzle. Sometimes the pieces are bigger, sometimes they're smaller. Sometimes the pieces are more revealing about what part of the picture they're a part of. That's why puzzles are a challenge for so many people. That's why they're called puzzles.

But as you put the pieces together, all of a sudden a picture starts to appear in front of you. Here we are at Bill 107 and the picture is acquiring some clarity that it didn't have even back in the days of Bill 26. That was a big piece of the puzzle, and you had to spend a lot of time reflecting on it. Lord knows, the minister responsible for it didn't know spit from Shinola when it came to what the impact of Bill 26 was going to be, but a whole lot of people who spent more time than he did researching and considering the impact of the bill did.



Here we are up to Bill 107 in the course of this debate today, and we're starting to see very much the link between Bill 26 and Bill 107. We're starting to see a very different vision of Ontario than what my grandfolks had, and I'm going to tell you that it's necessary to illustrate how important public services are to our community. Yes, I'm going to refer to the abandonment of public libraries by this government to illustrate —

**Mrs Margaret Marland (Mississauga South):** On a point of order, Madam Speaker: I think a member who has been in this place for 12 years, who knows the standing orders fully and well, should really respect those standing orders and you as Speaker and this chamber as a whole, and I think to continually talk about the libraries and the impact on libraries when we are discussing Bill 107, which bears no reference whatsoever to libraries, is totally out of order.

**The Acting Speaker:** Member for Mississauga South, I think every member in this House on all sides when debating bills expects some leniency from the Chair. I did speak to the member for Welland-Thorold and he did make an attempt to connect what he's saying to the bill at hand. I, of course, am not going to enter into the debate, but he has made an attempt to justify his interpretation of the bill. I will listen carefully, as I would ask all members to do. In my opinion, the member has come back and is making a case for the level of the debate which he has entered into. But I will listen carefully.

**Mr Kormos:** I don't understand, Speaker. My grandmother was such an inoffensive, kind, gentle woman.

**Mrs Marland:** Why weren't you like her?

**The Acting Speaker:** Order, please. Come on now.

**Mr Kormos:** In my family we call the grandmother "baba." In many of the Slavic communities, that's an appellation for one's grandmother.

Here again, I just wanted you to understand how important public institutions are, and I've used my dear grandmother, and God bless her, she helped raise me. She was a wonderful woman, a great woman, she was, who worked hard —

*Interjections.*

**Mr Kormos:** — all of her life and who asked for so little, but who worked to build and who understood public things, things that you shared with other people, the responsibility of financing that you shared with other people, because she knew what life was like before we had public water supplies and public sewage systems. She raised her kids over on a farm along the Welland River in Port Robinson. There was no public water source, there was no public sewage system, and she was one of the people, like so many others, who was prepared to make sacrifices, yes, and pay taxes, so that she could enjoy the help and security of publicly provided and clean water and a safe and efficient sewage system.

This government doesn't believe in the same sort of things that my grandmother did. I have no hesitation in suggesting that to you, and I'll tell you this: I'll stick with my grandmother's set of values before I'll join this government's set of values any day of the week, any minute of any hour, because she was a person who knew what family was and knew what community was. She knew what it meant to work together with others. She did

it in her village in the old country, in eastern Slovakia. They knew how to work together. They knew what cooperative efforts were all about. That's how you harvested your meagre crop. You couldn't do it alone, nor could you do it by contracting out, nor could you do it by endorsing the privatization of community activities.

**1640**

There'll be other times to talk more about my grandmother, I suppose. Do you know what? I think I'm going to, because I'm rather intrigued by the response that's generated in some of these government members. They not only don't like communities and families; they don't like grandmothers either. I find that rather intriguing. I happen to like grandmothers and I happen to have loved mine.

Let's take a look at what Bill 107 is going to do to places like Welland, St Catharines, Thorold, Pelham, Fort Erie, Grimsby, every single one of them. This bill is designed to facilitate and give effect to the private ownership of water and sewage systems. It's not particularly novel. It's very consistent with the agenda of this government, which is to hand over the public resources that people in this province have built with hard work and sacrifice and commitment, and yes, with their tax dollars, to this government's corporate friends.

Oh, there seems to be a unique preference for their American friends, the ones Stateside. It's this government that cares so little about jobs in Ontario that it contracts out its road-painting contract for the QEW down in Niagara. Does it contract it out to Canadian workers or Ontario workers? No. It contracts that out to a New York state company, bringing its workers across the Peace Bridge to come here to Ontario and work when Ontarians want to work and they're being told they can't by Mike Harris and his gang.

It contracts out the sign-painting along the highways. You heard the Minister of Transportation talk about how he was going to commercialize our highways. There we go again. They commercialize our highways by charging for signs. They're going to have these signs painted up. Does the Minister of Transportation contract out to Ontario sign-painters and Ontario sign-painting companies to do that work? No. This government doesn't care that workers are unemployed here in Ontario: skilled workers, qualified workers, and young people — a level of unemployment among young people that's a multiple of what their parents suffer. Once again, it contracts it out to an American firm.

Ambulance services? This government is prepared to hand over ambulance services like that of Port Colborne to an American operator so they can charge what they will and reap the profits and flow them right back into the United States. That's what this government's all about.

Remember the Minister of Community and Social Services. She doesn't hire a made-in-Canada consulting firm to take a look at her computer systems in the Ministry of Community and Social Services. No. These guys have got friends over in Chicago, an American-based multinational, Andersen Consulting. That's the parent company of the gang they contracted with for a \$180-



million potential contract. It's big bucks. It would be nice to keep that taxpayers' money here in Ontario. No.

Of course it makes you wonder, it does make you wonder, whether all of this is really aboveboard. Far be it from me to suggest that this government could be bought. Far be it from me to suggest that maybe there's a little bit of grease, some payola going on here.

**Mr Preston:** On a point of order, Madam Speaker: I brought a point of order last week that I talked to the Speaker about and that I could reintroduce today. The point of order was prompted by improper comments attributed to the member for Welland-Thorold. It was on Thursday, February 13. At the risk of being too obfuscatory, he's the master of superfluous vocal effluvium —

**The Acting Speaker:** Could you please just get on with your point of order.

**Mr Preston:** All right. I'm trying to tell the story, because it's backdated a little bit.

**The Acting Speaker:** Just get on with it.

**Mr Preston:** He did not withdraw. The Speaker didn't hear it and gave him a choice to withdraw, but probably because he didn't have the intestinal fortitude, he denied he said it. This is what was said at the time —

**The Acting Speaker:** The member for Brant-Haldimand, please take your seat.

**Mr Preston:** I don't have a point of order about something he said in this House? I'm sorry about that.

**The Acting Speaker:** No. Take your seat and I'll explain.

*Interjections.*

**The Acting Speaker:** Sorry, but your point of order is relating to something that happened on another day which you referred to the Speaker at the time. It was dealt with at that time. I can't take it as a point of order today.

**Mr Preston:** I believe you were the Speaker at the time this —

**The Acting Speaker:** It doesn't matter. It's done, it's over with. It was ruled on at that time. You can't raise it again.

**Mr Preston:** It was ruled on because the Speaker did not hear it, but it's in Hansard.

**The Acting Speaker:** It doesn't matter. I'm sorry. Could you please take your seat. It was dealt with that day. It's not a point of order now.

**Mr Preston:** Okay, I'm sorry.

**Mr Derwyn Shea (High Park-Swansea):** On a point of order, Madam Speaker: I know you're concerned about having a matter brought to your attention, and just before my colleague rose on a point of order I know that you heard from the Chair the member for Welland-Thorold impugning other members of this House, and I think you would want to rule on that.

**The Acting Speaker:** I'm sure the member for Welland-Thorold would like to get back and spend the next six minutes on Bill 107. I did hear his comments and it came very close. Although he said he wouldn't wish to impugn those motives, it came very close to the line, and in fact I would ask him to withdraw.

**Mr Kormos:** Withdraw. Now, Speaker, what I find fascinating is that when I get into the topic of what would motivate these people to sign these deals — just

wondering — look, one's suspicions are aroused. When you see the howls of protest at the mere mention of the prospect that maybe there's something more here than meets the eye that would motivate this —

**Mr Preston:** Madam Speaker, point of order: He's doing it again. Last time he said that the money was going into the pockets of the Attorney general.

**The Acting Speaker:** Okay. Thank you, I take your point. The member for Welland-Thorold — both of you, take your seats a moment. The member for Welland-Thorold, the member is quite correct, you are coming very close to the line here. You know the parliamentary rule. Please be more careful.

**Mr Kormos:** God bless the member. So here we are, Speaker, when we generate this type of response it creates suspicion, not only in my mind but in the minds of thousands, I tell you, perhaps millions of Ontarians.

This government wants to see water and sewer systems sold off to big corporations, maybe the same firms that bought them in Britain where water rates have climbed two and three times what they were in a public system, and where the profits are millions and millions of dollars. It's big bucks. Corporations don't have souls or consciences and indeed will go a long way to buy their way into the sort of scenario wherein they can make those kinds of profits. Again, one merely hopes for the highest of standards to be followed when there's that much money involved in the pilfering of public assets.

I'm overjoyed by the howls of protest, the squealing, the porcine squealing that comes from the government benches at my concern about corruption. Because when we're talking about the pilfering of public assets and handing them over to big corporations, multinationals, US firms, one hopes for the highest of standards from all involved. But one also knows that the realities of those big money transactions, the potential for such great profits, the potential to exploit and abuse homeowners and residents of each and every community in this province by selling off their water and sewer systems to private corporate profit-motivated operations, and to make the poor homeowner, the senior, the retiree, the young, single mother who's already been attacked by this government — why, one has at this point but the most modest of hopes for the highest of standards.

Do you want to know something? I'm not convinced this government has the highest of standards. We've witnessed, time after time after time, an abandonment of anything akin — well, a complete aloofness from anything akin to high standards. Turning back the clock to a time when communities didn't work together, communities are being told that they can't work together, communities are being undermined, communities are being Scud-missiled by a government that clearly doesn't care about communities, doesn't care about the families in those communities.

1650

It has declared it's anathema for women and the sick and the old and for workers who would dare to work collectively — see, they're anti-public-ownership, they're anti-cooperative-ownership. They want to isolate people. They want to separate people. That's why they don't like trade unions, because they don't want to tolerate the



prospect of workers who risk their life and limb and health in a factory, like Stelpipe down in Welland where they've had to be out on the picket lines since November 1 because you've got a company, Stelco, that feels as if it's gotten a licence, a blank cheque from this government to beat up on working people. This government doesn't believe in those sorts of things.

I tell you, I believe that the people of Ontario believe in those sorts of things. I give a warning to folks in this province: We'd better stop these guys fast and soon because we're not just talking about them taking little chips and chipping away at the foundations of our society. We're talking about them missiling and destroying and selling off what's left, such that the job of rebuilding could, if these people, these Tories are allowed to continue, take generations and could impose a cost on hard-working honest people like Ontarians are that's never been conceived.

Do I accuse this government of intellectual corruption? You bet your boots I do. Intellectual dishonesty? You bet your boots I do. There's nothing straightforward —

**The Acting Speaker:** The member's time has expired, thank you. Questions or comments?

**Mrs Marland:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Actually, it's a relief that this member's time has expired because we would be standing on our feet every two or three minutes to ask you to call him to order. It's highly regrettable when someone with the education of the member for Welland-Thorold, who is himself a lawyer, can stand in this place and enter into a debate with so much exaggeration and imputing the motives —

**Mr Kormos:** On a point of order, Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** Point of order, the member for Welland-Thorold.

**Mrs Marland:** — and he can't —

**The Acting Speaker:** This is getting out of hand. Can you come through with your point of order quickly, please.

**Mr Kormos:** About as quickly as the member sitting up there in the back row did. I should point out that I was called upon and pushed the envelope with a view to imputing motive and surely, as the clock ticks away on this member, surely the Speaker heard this member impute motive —

**The Acting Speaker:** Would the member for Welland-Thorold take your seat, please. The member for Mississauga South, I'm going to have the clock start again for you. Member for Mississauga South, just one moment, please. I would ask people to be a little bit more careful in what you say and to show each other a little bit more respect. Thank you. Now, member for Mississauga South, you can begin. Please start the clock again at two minutes. And order, please.

**Mrs Marland:** The member for Welland-Thorold, on whose speech I am now allowed to comment for two minutes, spent a great deal of his time causing concern for the members in this House because if there was any relevance to the truth in his comments it was merely coincidental.

**Mr Kormos:** She'll dive right in again.

**The Acting Speaker:** The member for Welland-Thorold, come to order now.

**Mrs Marland:** That's really a very polite way of saying something that all of us who have been sitting listening to him feel very strongly. It's very difficult to have a lecture from someone —

**Mr Gerretsen:** Not all of us. Point of order.

**The Acting Speaker:** Member for Kingston and The Islands, no.

**Mrs Marland:** — whose government imposed the greatest costs ever on the backs of the people of this province, a government that took the provincial debt from \$48 billion to \$98 billion in five years, to have a lecture from you about our government imposing costs. We are the government that is fighting for equity of opportunity, smaller government, lower taxes and reducing the expenses and costs that governments like yours incurred on behalf of the people of Ontario.

**Mr Kormos:** That's \$5 billion a year just to help you pay for a tax break for your rich friends, some of them corrupt.

**The Acting Speaker:** The member for Welland-Thorold, come to order.

**Mrs Marland:** It was bad enough that the previous government took our provincial debt from \$25 billion to \$48 billion in five years, but the NDP government took that \$48 billion to \$98 billion in five years. So please don't try to lecture us on who is imposing costs on whom. The decisions being made by our government are to reduce the cost of government for every person living in Ontario, and I'm proud of the decisions that our government is making.

*Interjections.*

**The Acting Speaker:** Order, please. Questions or comments.

**Mr Gerretsen:** Let's get one thing straight — and the member from Mississauga has got it totally wrong — of the \$100-billion debt we have in this province right now, about \$45 billion of that was due to Robarts and the Davis years. Your own government records clearly indicate that. I will admit that during the Liberal years about \$10 billion was added to the debt, an average of \$2 billion a year, and we all know about the \$50 billion that came on during the time the NDP was in power.

But let's also not forget that this government is going to add \$20 billion more to the debt of this province because it wants to give a tax break to the wealthiest in this province. We know that the 30% tax cut they promised in their Common Sense Revolution is going to cost the taxpayers of this province, according to their own records, an extra \$20 billion. So by the end of this mandate, the public debt of this province will have gone up from \$100 billion to \$120 billion, which is absolutely unbelievable from a government that claims to be fiscally responsible. How you can possibly hand out money back to people before you've got a budget balanced in any one given year is absolutely beyond me.

We should also remember that the last balanced budget in this province was in 1989, and it was done by a Liberal government. The government's own financial records very, very clearly show that.

But let's also not forget the real purpose of what we're talking about here today, Bill 107: We're talking about a bill that is going to download on municipalities water and



sewer services that the smaller municipalities of this province simply will not be able to afford. Don't do it. Withdraw the bill.

**The Acting Speaker:** Further questions or comments?

**Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre):** I appreciate the opportunity to comment on the speech of the member for Welland-Thorold. But first of all, I can't let it pass, and I don't think anyone would expect me to, I'm shocked that the member for Kingston and The Islands would be silly enough, actually, to talk about the last time there was a supposed balanced budget. We were only in power about two or three hours and your \$25-million surplus suddenly became a \$3-billion deficit, so you're not going to hold us on that one, and I'm surprised that you would go there.

Speaking very directly to the comments of the member for Welland-Thorold, it's always interesting to listen to him, and I'm sure that when he's on his feet the ratings and the number of viewers across the province leap to record numbers. A lot of it is because of the reaction of the government. The member for Welland-Thorold is talking about what he thinks will happen. He's using his experience, his principles, his understanding. He even talked about his grandmother for a great length of time in making his point. It never fails that when the member for Welland-Thorold is on his feet explaining, as he has a right to do, his opinion, you people go crazy, you go wild. What that says to an awful lot of folks is, "He must be touching a lot of open nerves." Why else would you do that? You do that because you can't afford to sit there and say nothing as he legitimately points out the failings in your agenda. The last thing this government should stand up and talk about is equity and fairness, because there's nothing about the Harris agenda that's equitable or fair, and that's what the member for Welland-Thorold is talking about.

1700

**Mr John O'Toole (Durham East):** Thank you very much for allowing me to speak with respect to the member for Welland-Thorold's comments on Bill 107, the Municipal Water and Sewage Transfer Act, with respect to allowing municipalities the privilege of taking over what in many cases — as the member for Kingston and The Islands has said, the municipality of Kingston has owned most of its facilities for many years. In fact, I'm holding a list here from many municipalities throughout Ontario that have requested from the Ministry of Environment to be allowed to manage and to own their plants. That's what we're doing. We're being cooperative with the municipalities to allow them to become the official operators of their municipal water treatment plants.

The previous government, in all respect, did try to deal with it under OCWA. It was a way of carrying a debt off book, really is what it was. They were really transferring what looked to be part of their huge debt load, which as we all have just discussed was growing rapidly — in fact it doubled — but OCWA, although it was a government agency at arm's length, carried all the debt for the capital off book so that it didn't look like \$100 billion.

To be put on the record, we are not privatizing the water and sewer treatment plants. What we're really doing is transferring them to the municipalities. Again, I

could read into the record a list of many municipalities. Bancroft and the region of Durham, for example, are on record as requesting the minister to transfer these responsibilities to them.

There's some revenue that goes along with this as well. As we all know, we pay our water bill, we know that, but we are allowing them to use and work with a private operator working for the municipality.

I think this freedom and liberty is something that's been requested by the municipalities, and I'm going to be supporting this bill.

**The Acting Speaker:** The member for Welland-Thorold can sum up.

**Mr Kormos:** I appreciate the comments of the member for Kingston and The Islands. I recall the balanced budget.

I disagree with the member for Hamilton Centre. I don't think it was days, it was mere hours before that balanced budget turned into a deficit. But I understood the urgency of the election call. That was that three-year election call, and they almost blew it by mere minutes. Even as it was, the public wasn't fooled.

I appreciate the comments of the member for Kingston and The Islands; and the member for Hamilton Centre, I enjoy his comments as well.

As to the member for — what's her riding over here? The member who was going to be Speaker. She misstates realities, she misstates facts that she should know.

**The Acting Speaker:** Member for Welland-Thorold, please refer to the members in the House by their ridings.

**Mr Kormos:** Where are we here? Oh, Mississauga South. She misstates facts. I wouldn't for the life of me think she was misleading the House; she simply doesn't know. I can accept that. I appreciate that.

Let's get down, again, to the recoiling and the shock and the horror and the squealing and moaning and pulling of hair and gnashing of teeth on the part of these government members. Boy oh boy, can one ever provoke a reaction by talking about the prospect of corruption. As I say, one is looking at the multibillion-dollar giveaway of things that our parents and our grandparents built with their hard work. The prospect of corruption, giving away our hospitals, our health care system, our public education, our colleges and universities, our waterworks and sewage treatment plants, maybe this government is on the take. Maybe that's why there are such howls of protest.

**The Acting Speaker:** Member for Welland-Thorold, you can't say that. I would ask you to withdraw it, please.

**Mr Kormos:** No.

**The Acting Speaker:** Member for Welland-Thorold, come on. Member for Welland-Thorold, I have to warn you. Will you withdraw that comment?

*Interjection.*

**The Acting Speaker:** I have to name you, in that case. Mr Kormos, I'd ask you to leave the chamber.

*Mr Kormos was escorted from the chamber.*

**The Acting Speaker:** Further debate?

**Mr Preston:** I'm pleased to speak today in favour of this bill. I am disappointed that the member for Welland-Thorold is gone because I had a few things to say about his reprehensible actions.



**Mrs Marland:** He was ejected.

**Mr Preston:** Yes, he was ejected, and boy oh boy, it was about time. The man doesn't incite us because of what he says. The fact that he says it and does not come anywhere near the topic, the fact that he's rude, that he's crude, is what incites us.

**The Acting Speaker:** Member for Brant-Haldimand, please take your seat for a moment. I think you're falling into the same trap you're criticizing the member for Welland-Thorold for. It is not useful in this debate for members from any side of the House to continue in that vein. I would ask the member to please come back to the bill. As you can see, I grant a lot of leniency in what you talk about, but these personal attacks are not getting anybody anywhere.

**Mr Preston:** Thank you, Madam Speaker, and you're right. I was falling into the same trap. I'm glad you have acknowledged the trap.

Anyway, speaking on Bill 107, first of all, the quality of Ontario's drinking water is not a matter we're going to —

**Mr Christopherson:** Worry about.

**Mr Preston:** — negotiate. No, it's non-negotiable.

**The Acting Speaker:** Member for Hamilton Centre, come to order, please.

**Mr Wildman:** What happened in the UK?

**Mr Preston:** In the UK, you ask, and I'll direct my comments to the Chair, the UK privatized its water and sewer systems. Contrary to some of the statements that were made today, we are not privatizing the water and sewer systems. We are handing them back to the very people the last speaker talked about, the people who worked so hard for them. We are handing them back to their local government so their local government can manage them properly.

**Mr Gerretsen:** This is pathetic.

**The Acting Speaker:** Order, please, member for Kingston and The Islands.

**Mr Preston:** England privatized its water and sewer at a time when its systems were completely run down; our systems, by and large, are in good shape, so there's no comparison between the two. First of all, we're not privatizing ours; we're handing them back to the municipalities where these people who, as have been mentioned, worked so hard for them can manage them.

I neglected to ask to split the time with another member of my party. Is that all right?

**The Acting Speaker:** Could you tell me who you're splitting the time with?

**Mr Preston:** The member for Mississauga South.

**The Acting Speaker:** Is that agreed? Agreed.

**Mrs Marland:** I wasn't —

**Mr Preston:** Well, you're stuck now. I'll give you the rest of my notes.

With Bill 107, the municipality will be able to determine what works best for them.

*Interjections.*

**Mr Preston:** This is Thursday afternoon. This is normal for Thursday afternoon.

We have a problem with trying to get things through local governments. We have a spot in Cayuga called the Broecheler Inn, and with the municipality having control,

they will be allowed to put in a septic tank, which is not allowed now because of the red tape we have to go through. The municipal health board says they can't put it in because of provincial regulations. The province will not say it should be put in, because they don't want to step on the toes of the local government. Consequently, this beautiful, beautiful inn can't operate. It will be able to operate when the municipality is responsible for the things that go on in the municipality, and that's what Bill 107 is all about.

**1710**

The member for Kingston and The Islands spoke about a level playing field, and in everything we're doing, in education — I got offtrack. In Bill 107, we're talking about a level playing field. In property taxes across Ontario, we're talking about a level playing field.

**Mr Wildman:** No, you're not. You're talking about hauling sewage uphill.

**The Acting Speaker:** Member for Algoma, come to order.

**Mr Preston:** A level playing field is what most of our legislation is about, fairness to the people of Ontario.

**The Acting Speaker:** Further debate?

**Mrs Marland:** This is a delightful opportunity. I am very happy to have this opportunity on Thursday afternoon to speak in support of Bill 107, the Water and Sewage Services Improvement Act. I would ask the members opposite to extend the same courtesy that I extend to them, which is that I do not interject.

**Mr Wildman:** But we can get up on points on order.

**Mrs Marland:** Yes, you may get up on points of order, but I will try not to impute your motives, as ours were by the previous colleague who was asked to leave the chamber.

One of the things that's always coming out in this discussion about the impact of this act is the question of the safety of our drinking water. I've always found that subject itself a very curious debate, because while we have a multibillion-dollar industry in the provision of bottled water in this province, which is not tested and doesn't require any evaluation other than one federal statute dealing with faecal coliform in the water — we have this profusion and growth industry in the sale of bottled water, yet we have under question from time to time whether the drinking water that comes out of our municipal taps and our municipal water supply lines is safe.

A number of years ago, I introduced a private member's bill in this House requiring a change in the industry of bottled water. People who were questioning the municipal water supply never realized the number of tests to which that supply is subjected. Obviously now, with this bill transferring the final 25% of ownership to the municipalities, which by the way have been doing a very excellent job in their responsibility for the operation of these facilities for the past number of years — people would ask me, "Is the water that comes out of our taps safe to drink?" Frankly, I know the region of Peel is the same as other municipalities across this province, and that water has something like 347 tests a month for any number of chemicals and contaminants. However, bottled water is required to have only one test. Bottled water plants do not come under the federal Food and Drugs Act and they



do not currently come under any provincial statute, yet people buy bottled water, including my own family. We now buy bottled water when we go to our cottage because of the pollution of the lake water. The point is that the water that comes out of our taps in our homes or anywhere where there's an online water supply through a municipal water treatment plant, yes, that water is very safe.

Tap water may not taste as great from time to time as bottled water, because different influences affect the taste. In my riding on the shores of Lake Ontario, when there are certain wind conditions and wave conditions on Lake Ontario, that does affect the taste of the water but it does not affect the safety of the water. I personally would give the tap water in the city of Mississauga to a newborn baby, because I feel absolutely confident about its safety. I think that speaks a great deal to how our system of water supply in the province has been provided, and I think we should be very grateful for that.

Personally, I think municipalities have done a very fine job of managing their 75% of Ontario's water and sewage facilities. By the way, we're talking about 937 water and sewage facilities. As a result also, I would say our government agrees with the recommendations of the Who Does What panel, which of course we all know was chaired by David Crombie. That recommendation was to transfer the ownership of the remaining 25% of the facilities, which are really only nominally owned by the province, so the municipalities will have the full ownership of something they have been responsible for operating to the tune of 75%.

There's another thing that I think is significant. We're always talking about what we do in Ontario and what we do in other provinces, and I think it's important to recognize that sewage and water treatment plants in other provinces are municipally owned and operated. Why should we be doing anything differently in Ontario? I really don't appreciate the fearmongering that's being introduced into the debate of this bill, that it means everything's going to be privatized and our water won't be safe and our sewage won't be handled properly. That's all — the politest way to say it is that it's not factual. It's unfortunate that our citizens become concerned by that amount of misinformation.

I think the important thing is that when the Honourable Norm Sterling, the Minister of Environment and Energy, introduced this Water and Sewage Services Improvement Act on January 15, the purpose of introducing the act, as I've said, was to deal with the recommendation of the Who Does What panel. It also means we will achieve a taxpayer saving by sorting out provincial and municipal accountability for the services they deliver. Frankly, I think anything we can do to achieve taxpayer savings is very exciting and obviously is the platform of our government on which we were elected.

The act will give the minister the authority to transfer full title of water and sewage treatment facilities to municipalities. While the Ontario Clean Water Agency will no longer own water and sewage services, it will continue to operate these services for the municipalities. I think people are now quite used to hearing about OCWA, the Ontario Clean Water Agency, as an arm's-

length agency of the government, and I think it has been doing a very good job.

The province will no longer be in a position of being the regulator, owner, operator and funder.

The province will focus on the setting and enforcing of higher standards for the operations of water and sewage treatment plants.

Consolidating control of water and sewage works at the municipal level of government will lead to a better, more efficient arrangement which is good for the environment. Anything we can do more efficiently and at a lower cost to taxpayers is a marvellous combination, especially when it's combined with greater protection of the environment.

1720

In addition, services that are being restructured to improve the way they are delivered so that the taxpayer receives value and the best possible efficiency at the least cost are also moves to be applauded. I think the long-term outlook for Ontario's water and sewage system will be improved by the passage of this bill.

Also, where water and sewage works service more than one municipality and where service municipalities are jointly responsible for the debts, ownership of these works will be transferred to the municipalities jointly, under a new municipal management structure, and I really believe that is fair also.

I want to say a little bit more about water quality. I don't think there is anything more important to the people of our province, after health, than the quality of the water we drink. It's kind of ironic, living in a province which is made up more of water than it is of land mass that we even have to question the quality of water. Tragically, as lakes have deteriorated, the challenge of protecting our water source has become more real, more serious, more accentuated, because the environment as a whole worldwide presents the same kind of challenge when we talk about clean water and a guaranteed source of clean water for the people who live here.

It certainly is well known that Ontario's water and sewage systems are considered among the best in the world and I've said that ensures residents receive safe drinking water, but what we have to really do a lot of work on and continue to do a lot of work on — I must say that in the past, previous governments have done a lot of work on this also — is to protect our lakes and rivers from the contaminated waste water discharges. Fortunately, we now know a lot more about that subject than we used to. Fortunately, there are new technologies available, and as new technologies emerge, also the cost is reduced. The question of contaminated waste water discharges is one that every one of us in this chamber, no matter where we sit, I know holds very dear to their conscience. We all have to be part of that solution.

In my opinion, the quality of our drinking water is non-negotiable. We expect clear, drinkable and safe water. It is the province's job to ensure standards are enforced and that is why the ministry will continue to set standards and vigorously enforce them. That is why it makes sense for us not to be the enforcers or the guardians of something we also operate. I think the role for us



as government is to make sure that water is protected and that therefore the citizens of Ontario are protected.

There will definitely be no compromise on the quality of our drinking water or the protection of the environment and human health. I know this is a matter the current Speaker who is in the chair has a personal interest in and to which she has demonstrated a personal commitment.

Ontario spends more on environmental protection than any other jurisdiction in Canada, so obviously that commitment is established, and whether we're dealing with taking drinking water out of the lake or discharging treated sewage into the lake, the safeguards and the management must be there.

We have twice as many staff in environmental monitoring and compliance as the federal government has in all of Canada, and I think that too says a great deal about where Ontario is today and what the ongoing commitment is.

There are other provisions in the Water and Sewage Services Improvement Act which deal with septic services. The responsibility for septic system inspections and approvals will appropriately be transferred to the municipalities this year as of October 1, 1997, and then municipalities will have a one-stop approvals process.

At the moment if you want to put in a new septic system, you go to the regional level of government for your permit. They tell you the size of system you need and the design of that system, whether it has to be an above-ground system or an inground system, the capacity of the holding tanks and the amount of weeping tile that is adjoined to that holding tank. It makes very good sense that they also, in giving the approvals, are responsible for the ongoing inspections and supervision. Of course, where we create a one-stop approvals and servicing process, obviously we're saving administrative costs and reducing the cost to government and therefore the cost to taxpayers.

I feel that the decision to transfer the remaining 25% of the ownership of these water and sewage systems in the province back to the municipalities makes very good sense. At one time, of course, the municipalities did own them and then the province took them over and then the province started building some of the newer plants. Certainly in a municipality like Mississauga with tremendous growth and expansion of residential and industrial developments, we have needed a lot of new water lines and watermains and we've also needed expanded capacity in our sewage treatment facility.

In my riding, interestingly enough, I have the major water treatment plant, the Lorne Park water treatment plant. It is a phenomenal, state-of-the-art engineering design. When you walk into it, it's almost like seeing something out of Star Wars. It's quite a phenomenal experience to see how that water intake from Lake Ontario, which we know contains a lot of things we wouldn't want to have in our drinking water, is treated and the number of processes it goes through in that water treatment plant to the point where it is safe, as I've said, for us to drink it.

I've also always found it very intriguing that I have the water treatment plant in the middle of my riding, and at

each end of my riding, to the west and the east ends, I have a sewage treatment plant. So at each end of the riding I have treated waste water going out into the lake and in the middle of the riding I have the lake water coming in to be treated for drinking water. It is wonderful to know that the technologies of both those plants, the sewage treatment plants and the water treatment plant, are so sophisticated that it works. It's a system that works.

1730

The one thing I might agree with in the comments of the member before he was ejected from the House this afternoon is the ability of the workers in those plants. We have a very dedicated staff at the Lakeview sewage treatment plant and the Lorne Park water treatment plant. For a very long number of years now, their commitment to their work, their high level of professionalism has made drinking water safe and accessible to everyone in the region of Peel.

Obviously, we don't supply just my riding. As we've had growth to the north all the way up to Brampton, we have a continuous supply of water coming from Lake Ontario. Frankly, it's quite exciting to think that with industry on the shore of Lake Ontario, all around the north shore of Lake Ontario, and the industry, of course, on the south shore of the lake but the north shore of New York state, it's a very challenging, complex matter to be able to take the water out of Lake Ontario and know that it's safe for drinking.

For those of us who have been involved in the environment for a very long time and were involved at the time of the Love Canal fiasco, the risk of the Love Canal and its impact on the Niagara River and the Niagara River flowing into Lake Ontario, when we went through those years, which is now 20 years ago, we were very nervous about whether our water treatment plants could keep up and still secure safe drinking water for the people of this province. Happily, the technology was there and there never was a risk for the people drinking Lake Ontario water.

In closing, I would just say that I commend the Honourable Norm Sterling, the Minister of Environment and Energy, for bringing forward Bill 107. It's a very straightforward piece of legislation. It's a commonsense move by our government, and obviously because the role of opposition is to oppose we won't expect to have any congratulations for this commonsense move. But anyone who would have knowledge of this bill and look into the impact on those services for the people of Ontario would know that it is excellent legislation. I'm very happy to stand in support of that legislation and to have had this brief opportunity to speak in support of it.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr John O'Toole):** Comments or questions?

**Mr Lalonde:** I'd just like to come back that I wonder if the member for Mississauga South knows about the water and sewers in the rural sector. There are a lot of municipalities that don't even have that. I refer to the fact that at the present time we have 937 water filtration and sewage plants in our province, of which 230 belong to the government. But let me tell you, we have 833 municipalities in Ontario. It shows there are quite a few municipalities that don't have the water and sewers, and



at the present time what this government is going to do, they have cancelled all the grants that used to be available to enable small communities to have drinking water.

We have in Ontario over one million septic tank systems. The provincial government, this Progressive Conservative government, has decided to transfer this responsibility to the municipality. It's going to cost the municipality an average of \$450 per household for the inspection, or whenever there's a requirement for a new building we average \$22,000 new construction a year on a septic tank.

Just to tell you, the provincial debt at the time the government took over in the province was \$96 billion. By the year 2000 it's going to be in the area of \$117 billion. But what worries me the most at the present time, we would like to sell all the water plants that the municipalities don't own, that are owned by the provincial government, but if we sell those plants it might bring back about \$9 billion to the government. So you're trying to reduce the debt —

**The Acting Speaker:** The member's time has expired.

**Mr Christopherson:** I want to comment on the remarks of the member for Mississauga South. I find it interesting that in her comments she said there isn't anything more important after health than clean water, and I wouldn't disagree with that. In fact, I would go a step farther and remind the member that experts in the field of public health and disease prevention will tell you that the greatest gain in health promotion was not the miracle drugs that we celebrate or the great surgery techniques or even the building of our great hospitals. No, the single greatest improvement was when clean water was provided for the public. That one measure prevented more illness and disease than any other single action taken by society in the history of society. I think that's a fascinating note and offers to support the point that the member for Mississauga South makes.

However, where I and my colleagues in the NDP part company with the member and her caucus is when she starts talking about the fact that this government is going to do more with less. That is simply not the case. The reality is, this is the government that has cut a third of the staff of the Ministry of Environment: 750 people whose sole job is to enforce the regulations that are in place, or used to be in place, and to care for and protect the environment.

This is a government that announced they're going to eliminate over half the regulations that are now in place that protect that water quality she professes to care about so much. They've also had Bill 20, Bill 57, Bill 73, hundreds of millions of dollars cut. People who are following this government on their environmental track record know they're not going to improve water quality, they're going to let it go.

**The Acting Speaker:** The member's time has expired. Further questions or comments?

**Mr Galt:** I first compliment the member for Brant-Haldimand and also the member for Mississauga South for two excellent presentations with a lot of good information. The member for Brant-Haldimand made the comment about in England it was privatized. Certainly we

have no intention of doing that. We looked at it and rejected that idea.

What we are doing, and it's very clear, we are turning the plants over to the municipalities. How the municipalities operate them is their choice. They can run them themselves or the operation can be privatized, but we have absolutely no intention of having those facilities privatized. Only the title of the plant will change in name and certainly, as far as the operation of the facilities, the standards, the inspection are all going to continue in the same manner that they always have in the past.

The member for Mississauga South made reference to taking bottled water to her cottage and I can respect that — sometimes lake water has an odour or a taste to it — but let me assure you that the quality, the safety, of our Great Lakes has improved tremendously over the last two decades.

Back in the 1970s you might have considered some of the fish out of the Great Lakes almost a hazardous waste with the amount of toxins that were in them. That has turned around tremendously in the last two decades. Many of the pollutants have dropped to a quarter or less of what they were in the 1970s in the fish in the Great Lakes. So just to point out, the environment is improving, and I'm not being partisan here. Under all stripes and colours of government the environment and particularly the waters of the Great Lakes have been steadily improving.

We hear a lot of emotionalism, and the member for Hamilton Centre was trying to build it up again, saying we're cutting over half the regulations when in fact we're trying to clarify the confusion that that government brought in to those regulations.

**Mr Gerretsen:** I would just like to comment very briefly on what the last member stated. It may very well be that the environment, particularly of the Great Lakes, is improving compared to the way it was 10 or 15 years ago.

1740

**Mrs Marland:** You are supposed to comment on my speech, not his.

**Mr Gerretsen:** Yes, I realize that and I am commenting on your speech. I thought it was a great speech. Perhaps you don't quite see the world the way I do, but it was a good speech as far as speeches go.

I think what we are mainly concerned about on this side of the aisle is that the environmental protection and regulations that are in existence right now, especially the inspectors, will be there to make sure environmental improvements that may have taken place over the last number of years will continue to do so. When the Ministry of Environment in effect has only one air quality inspector east of Toronto in all of eastern Ontario, whereas at one time I think there were four or five inspectors, it seems to me that is not heading in the right direction.

The laws we make in this House are only as good as the inspection abilities we have, to make sure they are being maintained and adhered to by the people of Ontario. If inspection requirements and qualities and the number of inspectors we have are going to reduce at the rate that has already happened, particularly within the Ministry of Environment, where we've only got about a



third of the inspectors left from the ones that were there two years ago, then I would take great exception with what the member for Northumberland is saying, that we're not heading in the right direction at all.

We cannot leave it to industry to regulate itself when it comes to the environment. Too many of us, all of us, owe it to ourselves and to our children to make sure the environmental rules and regulations are properly maintained and adhered to in this province.

**The Acting Speaker:** The member's time has expired. The member for Mississauga South has two minutes to summarize her argument.

**Mrs Marland:** I found it interesting that the member for Prescott and Russell was talking about the provincial debt in response to my comments, because I didn't mention the provincial debt in my comments. The fact that you have mentioned it gives me the opportunity to respond. I'm very happy to put on the record one more time that the provincial debt in 1985, when this province was 118 years old, was \$25 billion. It's unfortunate that new members don't do their homework and get the figures correct, because it was \$25 billion when the Liberal Party became the government in 1985 — not that they were elected to become the government; they formed an accord with the NDP and they were the government, although they had 48 seats and we had 52.

Really significant was that five years later the provincial debt was \$48 billion. What took this province 118 years to accumulate as a debt of \$25 billion took the Liberal government only five years to take to \$48 billion. What is probably even more significant and more depressing, and why our government is now in the position of having to make very tough decisions and take very strong measures to get the spending under control, is that it took our friends in the New Democratic Party, when they were the government, another five years to double the provincial debt again and leave us with a \$98-billion debt. When people stand up in this place and talk about these figures, they'd do well to do their homework and make sure their figures are accurate.

**The Acting Speaker:** The member's time has expired. Further debate.

**M. Lalonde :** Je vais vous adresser la parole en français pour les prochaines 20 minutes. Ça me fait plaisir de prendre la parole aujourd'hui sur le projet de loi 107, Loi visant à édicter la Loi de 1997 sur le transfert des installations d'eau et d'égout aux municipalités et modifiant d'autres lois en ce qui a trait à l'eau et aux eaux d'égout.

Ici en Ontario nous avons 937 usines d'eau et d'égout, aussi d'épuration des eaux usées. Nous avons 833 municipalités en Ontario. Cela veut dire que beaucoup de municipalités n'ont pas encore de services en place d'eau et d'égout. Pourquoi ? C'est que depuis un nombre d'années nous essayons d'obtenir les octrois nécessaires afin de mettre sur pied un système d'usines d'eau afin d'avoir de l'eau potable.

Mais actuellement nous étions sur le point d'avoir approuvé plusieurs nouvelles usines. Maintenant, avec ce projet de loi, ça va tout annuler les usines qui étaient en étude. De ce montant de 937 usines, nous avons 230 usines qui appartiennent au gouvernement provincial.

Le but principal de ce projet de loi est vraiment le transfert de ces 230 usines aux municipalités. J'ai dans mon comté de Prescott et Russell 19 municipalités, dont 18 qui sont les comtés unis de Prescott et Russell. Onze de ces usines d'épuration des eaux usées et quatre usines d'eau appartiennent au gouvernement.

C'est vrai que nous les payons indirectement à chaque année quand nous recevons une facture qui dit qu'on doit rembourser au gouvernement un certain montant. Mais je voudrais porter à votre attention la peur que nous avons dans le moment. C'est que nous allons demander aux municipalités un sous-octroi pour modifier ou améliorer votre système d'eau. Mais laissez-moi vous dire que nous sommes sur le point de transférer les responsabilités de ces 230 usines d'eau aux municipalités, des usines qui sont en défectuosité, des usines qui ne rencontrent pas les standards établis par la province, par le ministère de l'Environnement.

J'ai ici le village de Casselman d'une population d'un peu moins de 3 000, dont le plant avait été préparé pour un montant de 3 880 mètres cubes d'eau. Le ministère de l'Environnement a approuvé cette usine dont les plans avaient été préparés par une firme d'ingénieurs. Le ministère de l'Environnement a donné son approbation sur cette usine. Aujourd'hui nous nous apercevons que le village de Casselman ne peut plus développer parce que le ministère de l'Environnement a donné son approbation sur cette usine d'eau, ce qui démontre vraiment que seulement 1 950 mètres cubes d'eau peuvent être accommodés ou être desservis à la population. Nous avons un manque de plusieurs mille mètres cubes d'eau.

Mais qui va payer la facture pour l'augmentation ou pour remettre ce système en place tel que préparé lors des discussions avec le ministère ? Le coût de cette usine sera d'un montant d'au-delà tout près de 2 \$ millions. Encore une fois, qui va payer la facture ? Je crois que c'est la responsabilité du gouvernement de l'Ontario à voir à ce que les montants d'argent soient à la disposition de la municipalité de Casselman afin de mettre à date le plant d'usine d'eau.

C'est pour une population de 3 100 personnes que nous avons préparé les plants. La population devrait atteindre 3 500, mais on ne peut pas l'atteindre. On a mis un gel sur le développement puisque l'usine d'eau ne rencontre pas les standards de la province. Encore une fois, est-ce que le gouvernement provincial va défrayer les coûts pour mettre à date cette usine qui ne rencontre pas les données qui nous avaient été fournies ?

Le coût total va être de 1 783 000 \$. Espérons que le gouvernement, avant de prendre la position de transférer le tout à la municipalité, va faire les corrections nécessaires pour compenser le village de Casselman.

J'ai une autre inquiétude. J'ai le village de St-Paschal-de-Baylon, ou St-Pascal, que l'on l'appelle maintenant. Le plant d'eau a été construit voilà quatre ans. Les estimés étaient de 1,8 \$ millions. C'était un «pilot project», qu'on avait dit. Donc, maintenant le coût après la construction complétée est au-delà de 3 \$ millions, pour desservir une population de quelque 60 familles.

Aujourd'hui, on s'aperçoit que le gouvernement a changé ses standards pour le THM, mais avant d'aller aux standards de THM, j'aimerais vous dire que cette usine



actuellement a coûté à certaines personnes — un fermier a dû payer au début 25 000 \$ et 4 000 \$ par année.

1750

Pour le mettre à date après quatre ans, on doit doubler, augmenter de 105 %, le coût de l'eau pour les consommateurs de St-Pascal. Pourquoi devons-nous augmenter le coût de 105 % ? Encore une fois, c'est une erreur du gouvernement ou du ministère de l'Environnement, et j'espère — les gouvernements du passé ont été à faire les études, et nous étions sur le point d'octroyer le village de St-Pascal, ou la municipalité de Clarence, dont St-Pascal fait partie. Nous étions pour compenser ce village pour l'erreur qui s'était déployé à cours de route.

Mais je crois que personne ici aurait accepté l'eau, l'eau potable, qu'on dit, à boire, dans ce village. Le montant de THM alloué est de 100 parties par million maintenant ; nous étions à 3 300 parties par million de THM.

Cela veut dire que lorsqu'on étudie l'effet sur une personne que le THM peut avoir, on peut développer le cancer, mais nous avons été un peu plus loin. Nous avons regardé quel effet le THM peut avoir sur la vache laitière. Le ministère de la Santé, le ministère de l'Environnement nous ont dit, «Aucun effet sur la qualité du lait,» mais on avait oublié de regarder la quantité du lait. Donc, le cultivateur qui était branché à ce système d'eau a dû cesser d'utiliser cette eau puisqu'on avait reconnu une diminution dans la quantité du lait. Après qu'il a coupé la consommation de l'eau de cette usine d'eau, la quantité de lait a augmenté. Le ministère m'a toujours dit, «Non, non, cela n'affecte pas la vache laitière.» Tout l'a prouvé ; le ministère des Richesses naturelles et le ministère de l'Environnement : «Nous avons trouvé que ça n'affecte pas la qualité,» mais définitivement la quantité.

J'ai ensuite le village de l'Original. Le village de l'Original, c'est une communauté de au-delà 2 600 personnes. Encore là, le ministère de l'Environnement a fait une grosse erreur. Nous avons construit un plant. Le village de l'Original, qui est le village le plus ancien de l'est ontarien, a fait construire une usine d'eau. Nous sommes situés sur la Rivière des Outaouais, tout le long de la rivière, qui est une richesse naturelle pour les gens de l'est ; je suis fier de dire que la rivière des Outaouais est une richesse naturelle pour nous tous, Canadiens, Ontariens et Ontariennes.

Mais je ne sais pas quelle idée avait le ministère. Ils ont décidé de creuser deux puits. Ils ont dit, «Ça va coûter moins cher.» Il est vrai que ça va coûter moins cher sur le coup, mais ils nous ont dit qu'ils nous garantissaient qu'il n'y aurait aucun problème pour 40 ans. Voilà au-delà de 20 ans maintenant, nous avons été obligés de fermer un puits. Nous sommes laissés avec un puits, et actuellement il est très difficile de desservir la population.

Combien v-a-t'il coûter maintenant de construire une usine et s'approvisionner de la rivière des Outaouais ? Donc, ça va être très difficile, parce que le gouvernement, avec ce projet de loi, va couper tous les octrois qui étaient disponibles pour la construction d'usines d'épuration des eaux usées ainsi que d'usines d'eau potable.

J'ai le village de Wendover, qui est dans le canton de Plantagenet Nord. Encore là, nous avons fait beaucoup de

recherches. Nous avons une usine d'eau. Nous sommes installés sur la rivière des Outaouais encore là. Tout d'un coup, on nous a dit, et puis j'ai le rapport ici, qu'ils demandent à toutes les municipalités qui ne rencontrent pas les critères après que le ministère de l'Environnement de réévaluer le montant de THM qui était permis pour la consommation d'eau. Le village de Wendover avait 160 parties par million de THM dans l'eau. Donc, on a dit, «Vous avez dépassé le montant de 100. Maintenant, vous ne pouvez pas vous approvisionner d'eau potable de votre usine d'eau. Donc, maintenant, pour vous vous servir de l'eau, on doit la faire bouillir.» Donc, encore là, nous avons fait une étude. Le gouvernement a défrayé les coûts pour faire les études au complet. Et même, encore là, on est sur la rivière des Outaouais ; on a dit, «On doit regarder s'il n'y aurait pas une bonne veine d'eau aux alentours.» Quelle plus bonne veine d'eau que la rivière des Outaouais ? C'est une rivière existante depuis — ben, elle a toujours été là. Il faut dire qu'elle s'était peut-être réduite en largeur. C'était anciennement le lac Champlain, on nous dit, mais aujourd'hui, c'est une rivière qui est développée davantage et on peut s'approvisionner d'eau n'importe quel temps.

Mais le coût de mettre en place un système d'eau pour cette municipalité est au-delà de huit millions de dollars. Est-ce que vous croyez qu'une population d'au-delà de 700 personnes va pouvoir se permettre les dépenses de huit millions de dollars ? Jamais. Mais, je crois encore là, le gouvernement voit tout ça venir, et puis ils disent, «Il est grandement temps qu'on transfère le plus vite possible aux municipalités, parce qu'on va avoir des économies.» C'est vrai que vous allez avoir des économies. Est-ce que vous voulez que les gens déménagent tous à Mississauga ? Est-ce que vous voulez que les gens déménagent à Oshawa ?

Je crois qu'il est raisonnable de dire que nous vivons dans le plus beau secteur de l'Ontario, l'est ontarien, qui est Prescott et Russell, et les gens aiment demeurer là. C'est un coût maintenant que vous voulez transférer à nous dans nos municipalités. Rappelez-vous que vous ne nous découragerez pas. Nous allons continuer à habiter Prescott et Russell, mais je crois que le gouvernement, avant de transférer toutes ces dépenses et passer la lecture du projet de loi 107, qui va transférer les responsabilités aux municipalités, on devrait y penser deux fois.

Je sais que les personnes nous représentant du gouvernement qui viennent des grands centres ne connaissent pas ce que c'est qu'un secteur rural. Donc, encore une fois, la grosse peur que nous avons, c'est que le projet de loi 26 va permettre aux municipalités de vendre le plan d'eau, l'usine d'eau, ou l'usine d'épuration des eaux usées, pour essayer de faire des économies. Mais, à long terme, nous allons payer tellement cher pour avoir de l'eau potable, que ça va être plus économique d'acheter une bouteille de Coke, une bouteille de Seven-Up, que d'acheter une bouteille d'eau. C'est pour ça aujourd'hui qu'on fait fortune avec nos machines qu'on voit un peu partout. On vend l'eau en bouteille maintenant.

Donc, c'est peut-être que le gouvernement a des parts dans ces compagnies-là. Je ne sais pas si on va encourager maintenant la vente d'eau en bouteille. Comme mon collègue de Mississauga South m'a dit tout à l'heure,



lorsque je me rends au camp, j'achète des bouteilles d'eau. Est-ce que vous voulez que les personnes qui vivent dans les communautés urbaines commencent à faire l'achat de bouteilles d'eau afin de pouvoir avoir de l'eau potable ? Je ne crois pas que ce soit la réponse actuellement.

Je vais revenir à St-Pascal. Je crois qu'il n'y a personne d'entre vous à l'autre côté qui aimerait vivre l'expérience que nous vivons. Je me rappelle, lorsque j'étais jeune, on aimait jouer avec de différentes expériences. Lorsqu'on voulait se teindre les cheveux, on se lavait la tête avec du peroxyde. Mais je vous dis que maintenant, dans le village de St-Pascal, on doit y injecter une quantité de peroxyde dans l'eau à tous les jours ; donc, les gens boivent du peroxyde. On dit que ça n'affecte pas la santé des personnes, mais moi-même, je n'aimerais pas boire de l'eau qui contient du peroxyde.

Mais à tous les jours, St-Pascal boit de l'eau dans laquelle on injecte du peroxyde à tous les jours afin de réduire le THM. Nous avons réduit le chlore, parce que le chlore causait un colorant dans l'eau. L'eau a été rendue jaune. On aurait pu dire de l'Orangeade. On ne pouvait plus laver notre linge dans cette eau. On a réduit le chlore, on a rajouté du peroxyde, pour dire aux gens, «Oui, vous pouvez boire de l'eau maintenant.» \

Mais encore une fois, une maison à St-Paschal-de-Baylon QU'ON payait à 440 \$ par année pour l'eau, on vient la monter à 902 \$, et une résidence, un «group

home», qui a au-delà de 20 personnes, le coût par année va être 17 000 de dollars par année pour l'eau potable. Je crois, chers amis, qu'avant de faire tous ces transferts aux municipalités, on devrait prendre la responsabilité, que vous soyez un gouvernement ou non, que tout le monde devrait voter contre ce projet de loi ou y apporter les modifications nécessaires. Actuellement on devrait dire que nous allons mettre à date toutes les usines d'eau et d'épuration des eaux usées, et ensuite peut-être qu'on pourra penser à faire les transferts aux municipalités.

Donc, ça m'a fait plaisir de vous laisser savoir, de vous mettre au courant des problèmes que nous vivons dans le secteur rural. Je crois encore qu'avant de prendre une décision finale sur ce projet de loi-là, nous allons nous arrêter encore et regarder tout l'impact que ce projet de loi aura envers les municipalités rurales.

**The Acting Speaker:** Further debate? Being none, Mr Galt has moved second reading of Bill 107. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

**Mr Ed Doyle (Wentworth East):** I believe we have unanimous consent to have a recorded division on this motion on Monday, February 24, immediately after question period.

**The Acting Speaker:** Carried? Agreed.

This House stands adjourned until Monday at 1:30 of the clock.

*The House adjourned at 1801.*



# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

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Cochrane South / -Sud	Bisson, Gilles (ND)	London North / -Nord	<b>Cunningham, Hon / L'hon Dianne</b> (PC) Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, minister responsible for women's issues / ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales, ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
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Etobicoke-Humber	Ford, Douglas B. (PC)	Norfolk	Barrett, Toby (PC)
Etobicoke-Lakeshore	Kells, Morley (PC)	Northumberland	Galt, Doug (PC)
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Etobicoke West / -Ouest	<b>Stockwell, Hon / L'hon Chris</b> (PC) Speaker / Président	Oakwood	Colle, Mike (L)
Fort William	McLeod, Lyn (L)	Oriole	Caplan, Elinor (L)
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Prescott and Russell / Prescott et Russell		Timiskaming	Ramsay, David (L)
Prince Edward-Lennox- South Hastings / Prince Edward-Lennox- Hastings-Sud	Fox, Gary (PC)	Victoria-Haliburton	<b>Hodgson, Hon / L'hon Chris</b> (PC) Minister of Natural Resources, Minister of Northern Development and Mines / ministre des Richesses naturelles, ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Quinte	Rollins, E.J. Douglas (PC)		<b>Witmer, Hon / L'hon Elizabeth</b> (PC) Minister of Labour / ministre du Travail
Rainy River	Hampton, Howard (ND) Leader of the New Democratic Party / Chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique	Waterloo North / -Nord	Kormos, Peter (ND)
	Conway, Sean G. (L)	Welland-Thorold	Amott, Ted (PC)
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	Bradley, James J. (L)	Willowdale	Kwinter, Monte (L)
St Andrew-St Patrick	Froese, Tom (PC)	Wilson Heights	Vacant
St Catharines	<b>Leach, Hon / L'hon Al</b> (PC) Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement	Windsor-Riverside	Pupatello, Sandra (L)
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St George-St David	Martin, Tony (ND)	Windsor-Walkerville	<b>Palladini, Hon / L'hon Al</b> (PC) Minister of Transportation / ministre des Transports
		York Centre / -Centre	Parker, John L. (PC)
Samia		York East / -Est	Turnbull, David (PC)
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Scarborough-Agincourt	Phillips, Gerry (L)	York-Mackenzie	Sergio, Mario (L)
Scarborough Centre / -Centre	Newman, Dan (PC)	Yorkview	
Scarborough East / -Est	Gilchrist, Steve (PC)		
Scarborough-Ellesmere	<b>Mushinski, Hon / L'hon Marilyn</b> (PC) Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation / ministre des Affaires civiques, de la Culture et des Loisirs	York South / -Sud	Kennedy, Gerard (L)

A list arranged by members' surnames and including all responsibilities of each member appears in the first and last issues of each session and on the first Monday of each month.

Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.



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No. 167

N° 167

ISSN 1180-2987

**Legislative Assembly  
of Ontario**

First Session, 36th Parliament

**Assemblée législative  
de l'Ontario**

Première session, 36<sup>e</sup> législature

**Official Report  
of Debates  
(Hansard)**

**Journal  
des débats  
(Hansard)**

**Monday 24 February 1997**

**Lundi 24 février 1997**

Speaker  
Honourable Chris Stockwell

Président  
L'honorable Chris Stockwell

Clerk  
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier  
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# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 24 February 1997

# ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 24 février 1997

*The House met at 1332.  
Prayers.*

## MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

### FIRE SAFETY

**Mrs Sandra Papatello (Windsor-Sandwich):** Today we will be voting on Bill 84, the firefighter bill. We, the Liberal Party, are on record as being opposed to Bill 84.

Today is a very timely day for me to present a gift to the Solicitor General, Bob Runciman, an example of the firefighters from Windsor who work diligently year-round, not just as firefighters in our community but activists in our community. These are individuals who are very concerned about the community at large. This is the calendar they come out with annually. Here's a picture of Glen Zimmerman. This is the kind of thing that residents in Windsor will pay money for, as a calendar, when their funding goes into organizations like the burn unit in Windsor.

The firefighters in Windsor are very concerned about the negative effects of Bill 84. Ontarians are concerned about the opportunity for municipalities to privatize thanks to Bill 84. Residents in Windsor don't want Bill 84. They've had a wonderful organization speaking to Windsor residents, saying no to Bill 84.

It's our job as opposition, it's our job as legislators to tell the government no to Bill 84, and indeed my pleasure to present a Windsor calendar of Windsor firefighters to the Solicitor General.

### HEALTH SERVICES

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Statements. The member for Lake Nipigon.

**Mr Gilles Pouliot (Lake Nipigon):** Thank you, Mr Speaker. I trust you had a pleasant weekend indeed. Welcome back.

The Lake Nipigon Region Hospital Association represents the five hospitals in the communities of Geraldton, Manitouwadge, Marathon, Terrace Bay and Nipigon.

The introduction of yet another level of government in this regard will be a serious impediment to the coordination of these services. The association is particularly concerned with the reality that municipalities already struggling with serious financial adjustments will not be able to maintain the level and quality of health service which Ontarians require.

They want answers. The hospitals in Lake Nipigon want a guarantee that the proposed involvement of municipal governments in the provision of health services

will not impede the efficient function and coordination of care. They want this government to ensure that this proposed involvement will not result in degradation or loss of services in the north, and they also want this government to guarantee a fair and equitable access to health care for all residents in our great province of Ontario.

### TILLSONBURG

**Mr Toby Barrett (Norfolk):** I rise in the House today to recognize the town of Tillsonburg's 125th anniversary, which occurred yesterday. Tillsonburg anchors the intersection of the Norfolk, Elgin and Oxford ridings. The driving force behind the incorporation of Tillsonburg was Edwin Delevan (E.D.) Tillson, the son of founder George Tillson. E.D. and his supporters pushed for town incorporation, while Aaron Musselman, proprietor of the Oil Exchange Hotel, which boasted the longest bar and the best cigars in town, spearheaded the campaign for village incorporation. The local paper at that time, the Observer, helped to sway public opinion to town status.

In the first few weeks of January 1872, petitions for town incorporation were laid before the Ontario Parliament. The bill to incorporate Tillsonburg as a town received third reading on February 23, 1872. By 1900, Tillsonburg was known internationally for the many products manufactured by the Tillson mining empire. Acclaimed as the town's first mayor, E.D. Tillson's business holdings included a 600-acre farm known as Annandale. Today Annandale House is beautifully restored and home to a community museum.

Tillsonburg is a vibrant, progressive community with a strong auto manufacturing, retail and tobacco-based economy. It gives me great pleasure to congratulate Tillsonburg on this historic milestone.

### VIDEO LOTTERY TERMINALS

**Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex South):** I rise today to give this government a glimpse of the future. After reading the weekend Star and this morning's Globe and Mail, the government backbenchers can see their political lives flashing before their eyes.

As this government prepares to exponentially increase gambling in Ontario, we're about to see a different kind of revolution begin, a revolution that questions the wisdom of placing some 20,000 video slot machines in every mini-casino, bar and restaurant in every neighbourhood of every community in Ontario.

The only reason this government is willing to increase the number of problem gamblers and addict youth to these machines is greed. This government is embarrassed to give us a clear answer on the revenue it will receive.



However, it is clear that these video slot machines alone will produce over \$1 billion per year, money that will be sucked out of communities so that Mike Harris can deliver his tax cut; money that could be buying groceries, refrigerators, even cars; money that could be creating jobs, not addiction.

The Mike Harris government can place one sure bet. The backlash against video slot machines that is under way in Alberta will find its way to Ontario soon.

#### SERVICES FOR ABUSED WOMEN

**Ms Shelley Martel (Sudbury East):** Public reaction to the Conservative government's McGuire report has been swift and harsh. In North Bay alone over 700 petitions and postcards have already been sent to Mike Harris condemning recommendations to reduce the role of sexual assault centres in working with victims of crimes. To date, no one from the community has received a response to this very serious issue.

Amelia Rising Women's Collective: Sexual Assault Centre of Nipissing is pushing this matter further. On Friday I met with the coordinator, a counsellor and a board member of Amelia Rising in North Bay. I was overwhelmed by the need which the staff and 26 volunteers are trying to meet. The waiting list for individual and group counselling is over six months long. This centre and the survivors want their MPP Mike Harris to finally take a stand. They want to know if he will protect or abandon the clients who need support.

1340

Staff and volunteers have collected over 900 newspaper articles from across the province which reported on violence against women. Some 103 appeared in the media during January 1997 alone. These women are illustrating the magnitude of the problem in a graphic way. They know that implementation of the McGuire report will only heighten, not end, this violence. I am sending these articles, which I have with me today, to Mike Harris. Perhaps this pressure will finally prompt a response from him. If not, another 700 letters were sent from North Bay today to him at Queen's Park. It's time the Premier took a stand in favour of women and survivors in his own riding of Nipissing.

#### MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

**Mr Dan Newman (Scarborough Centre):** I rise in the House today in response to my many constituents who have called to congratulate this government with respect to Bill 103, the City of Toronto Act.

The current system is riddled with needless waste and duplication. Our government has committed to end years of overspending and overtaxing by the Liberal and NDP governments. We have acted.

This is what Diane Francis had to say in Maclean's magazine: "Mike Harris and the Tories are to be applauded for undertaking the most intelligent re-engineering of government to date in Canada, perhaps North America.... It will save taxpayers at least \$500 million over the next three years."

To the Liberals and NDP practising old-fashioned political opportunism, I say that the taxpayers of Metro

will not be fooled by your doomsday predictions. When your policies consist only of opposing everything this government is trying to do, the taxpayers are not fooled. You had the chance to stand up for Ontarians and you didn't.

Most Ontario residents know there is too much unnecessary duplication in government. People know it's not common sense to have seven different sets of rules, seven different sets of administration and seven sets of local councils debating issues when only one will do. The current patchwork of local rules and regulations does not work. A unified city of Toronto will put an end to the confusion.

#### SCHOOL BOARDS

**Mrs Lyn McLeod (Fort William):** There's something incredible happening in the committee hearings on the government's education bill. It would be incredible if what was happening was that the government was actually wanting to hear the presentations being made. It would be incredible if they were listening to the concerns and were ready to revise their legislation in light of the concerns heard. But that's not what's happening.

What is happening, and it is incredible, is that this government is doing its best to control the presentations to do as much damage control as it can to protect its legislation. They are shutting out more than a thousand citizens who want to make their views heard here in Toronto and they are intimidating those who are making their voices heard.

This concerted effort to try and silence opposition started with the Minister of Municipal Affairs making sure that the parents of Frankland school could not bring a legal challenge to slow down the introduction of this bill. It continued with the Minister of Education locking out the parents of Annette Street Public School when he came to their school to talk about the education of their children.

Now we have the government members being provided with profiles of those who are criticizing the bill, complete with questions that will steer the critics away from their real and more controversial concerns. These are private citizens. There is now information being developed and being kept secret on private citizens. Is this government so afraid of criticism that it has to keep a checklist on who is going to say what, when? Is this government so fearful of dissent that it is determined to make even these minimal public hearings a complete and total sham?

#### SAULT STE MARIE ECONOMY

**Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie):** The Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism is coming to my community, Sault Ste Marie, tomorrow to meet with the board of directors of the lottery corporation. Even more important, he's going to be meeting with my constituents. He'll be meeting with the chamber of commerce and with the municipal council, and they have only one thing on their mind: the state of the local economy.

This government is about to make decisions that are going to affect us directly. I hope he's going there to



listen to what they have to say, because what they're going to tell him is, number one, don't privatize the lottery corporation, because it is one of the major and fundamental pieces of the industrial sector of our community and those jobs are very important not only to those who have them but to the whole community. They're also going to tell him that what we want in Sault Ste Marie is a full-fledged casino — not a mini-casino, not a charitable gaming club, but a full-fledged casino that will actually attract dollars from outside the community into our community and create some work that will be substantial and make a contribution to the economy of our area; not a mini-casino that will suck money out of the pockets of the local people and create significantly less by way of job opportunity and not make the contribution to our area that a full-fledged casino, on which we've had a referendum, would make.

Minister, listen tomorrow when they tell you, "Don't privatize the lottery corporation and don't give us a mini-casino." If you're going to put a casino in our community, make it a real one.

#### CARDIAC SURGERY

**Mrs Helen Johns (Huron):** Heart disease and stroke continue to be the number one killer of Canadian men and women, claiming nearly 79,000 and accounting for 38% of Canadian deaths, versus the second-leading cause of death, cancer, which accounts for 28% of Canadian death.

Heart disease and stroke cost the Canadian economy \$17 billion a year in direct and indirect costs. This government has taken action to fight the odds against this disease through the reinvestment of \$16 million last year to increase the number of surgeries by 19%. This means that 9,100 people in Ontario will be able to have heart surgery each year. That's 1,400 more people who will benefit from the program.

Also as part of the government's reinvestment of health care savings, eight cardiac care hospitals received about \$2 million in one-time funding to help pay for an innovative device for heart patients: coronary stents. The extra funding means Ontario's eight cardiac surgery centres will be able to provide improved access to coronary stents for more than 750 additional patients.

Heart and stroke research has shown that adopting a healthy lifestyle can significantly lower one's risk of developing heart disease or stroke. It's never too late to start to reduce your risk.

#### STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

##### TRUCKING AND BUS SAFETY

**Hon Al Palladini (Minister of Transportation):** I'm here today to introduce legislation that addresses a specific problem that is targeted at bus and truck owners and operators. First, I would like to review what the Harris government has done to date to make trucks and buses safer.

Before the Christmas break the House passed Bill 92, which contained several truck safety measures, including expanding the powers of the registrar of motor vehicles, legislation for the carrier safety rating and requiring operators to keep MTO advised of the size of their fleet and the distances travelled.

In addition to this, MTO has dramatically stepped up its enforcement activities. By the end of March, MTO staff will have inspected over 40,000 vehicles, more than twice as many as in the previous years. Between last April and this January, they removed 2,400 potential tragedies from our roads by seizing the plates of 2,400 vehicles. They also laid 11,600 charges.

Other measures implemented by the Harris government include mandatory training for wheel installers; higher fines, to a maximum of \$20,000, the highest in Canada; lifting the axle weight moratorium; air brake training for truck drivers — and these are only a few of our changes.

As I have said many times, we have made great strides. However, we still have a long way to go and will not stop until our roads are the safest in North America, which brings me to the legislation I am presenting today.

I had hoped to introduce this legislation as part of our spring bill, but the dramatic increase in truck wheel separations and the seriousness of this offence has prompted me to move forward on this matter alone. Since January 1995, about 113 truck wheel separation incidents have been reported. An inquest into the fatalities caused by wheel separations had recommended tougher sanctions against trucking companies. The inquest also recommended that fines for existing offences be increased and that wheel installers be required to take specialized training.

This government implemented both these recommendations last fall. Unfortunately, some owners of commercial vehicles and operators of truck and bus companies are still not getting the message.

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Given the severity of this escalating problem, a wheel separation on a commercial vehicle will become an absolute liability offence. That means if a wheel comes off a truck or a bus while travelling along a highway, the owner of the commercial vehicle and/or the operator of truck and bus companies will be held accountable. No excuses will be allowed. The fine for this offence will range from a minimum of \$2,000 to a maximum of \$50,000.

This is a serious problem with serious consequences. The \$50,000 fine will be the highest under the Highway Traffic Act. Companies which fail to pay the fine will have their operating privileges suspended until the fine is paid. The conviction will go on the carrier's record, and that could mean being called on the carpet before the registrar of motor vehicles. The onus would be on the carrier to prove that they have the proper procedures in place that would prevent any more wheel separations from happening. If the registrar is not satisfied with their program, he has the authority to suspend or cancel the carrier's operating privileges in Ontario.

Together, these fines and early deterrents are strong incentives for the trucking industry to spend both money and time to improve their vehicle maintenance programs.



Commercial vehicle owners and the operators of truck and bus companies are the people who should be held accountable and responsible for proper vehicle inspections and for the upkeep of their fleet.

Members of this House have continually reminded me of their concern about truck safety and in particular about wheel separations. This government has acted quickly and decisively on road safety; I ask that this House now do the same. I believe that once all members have had the opportunity to read this bill, they will consent to its immediate passage into law.

**Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-Walkerville):** We welcome this long-overdue bill and say to the minister that we will support it and hope we can pass it this week. The only thing we regret is that it has taken you 18 months to get to this point. After repeatedly raising this issue in the House, we find that finally you're prepared to respond.

We also want to say to the minister that it's not enough to simply change the regulations; you need to have the power to enforce your regulations, you need to have the power to enforce your law. Our concern rests with your commitment to enforce the law.

We heard last week, for instance, in televised debate from the OPP, that there's no mechanism for enforcing mandatory training on wheel installers. Your so-called maximum fines that have been implemented already: not one has been levied. The lifting of the axle-weight moratorium does not argue or deal with the issue of truck weights in general. The air brake training for truck drivers: Again the OPP have told us that this is not enforceable.

I had the opportunity to be at an inspection station last Friday when you were making your announcement about this. A simple thing like a torque wrench, which your ministry has refused to provide to those inspection stations, would make the enforcement of your own regulations and laws much easier and much more effective.

But I guess we shouldn't be surprised about the government's lack of willingness to enforce its own laws. It's too bad they didn't bring to their desire to enforce laws the same zeal they bring to closing hospitals and to laying off nurses. It's too bad they didn't put the priority on truck safety that they put on cutting schools and reducing our education. It's too bad this government hasn't made those kinds of commitments. It's too bad that 113 of these wheel incidents have happened since January 1995 and it has taken the government this long to implement. Finally, I'd like to say it's too bad this government wouldn't have made this announcement in the House prior to doing its little window dressing, as it was called by the family of one of the victims, prior to this massive barrage of public relations.

Yes, this is a government that's about public relations. It's not a government that's concerned about our kids and their education. It's not a government that's concerned about health care and good hospitals. It's a government that fundamentally doesn't understand the real issues that confront the people of this province or their concerns with the government's agenda.

We in the opposition will work with the government to pass this bill, but that doesn't mean it's the end of the

debate. The debate turns to enforcement. The debate turns to this minister taking responsibility for what is his responsibility, making it work on our roads here in Ontario. We will continue to press enforcement in the same way we will press good health care in this province. A government that has no comprehension of good health care has to be brought to task. It has to be made known where we stand. We will bring to the question of enforcement the same passion we'll bring to our arguments against the cuts this government has made in education.

We want to make highway safety a priority. We want to make schools a priority. We want to make health care a priority. We think it's time the government abandon its agenda and get on with what matters to people in this province: their hospitals, their schools, their roads.

Let's work together, Minister. Yes, we'll support you on this bill. Now you take some of our ideas in health care and education and maybe, working together, we can make this province a better place for everybody, not just for your friends who will benefit from that very generous tax cut.

**Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines):** The Liberal transportation critic Dwight Duncan has already suggested that, after forcing you to finally deal with this issue, we deal with it expeditiously. I can assure you as House leader of the Ontario Liberal Party that we will work to expedite this legislation. I call upon you to put aside your other agenda and bring this legislation forward this week. There's a consensus on this.

At no time has your House leader or anybody else mentioned that this bill would be forthcoming. You've been busy pushing other bills. If you're serious about this one, you will set aside your downloading legislation, legislation that nobody wants, and you will proceed with this this week.

You're going to find out there's a consensus in this House. We should be moving forward. I can tell you that as far as the Liberal Party is concerned, we'll proceed with this legislation right away. Just push the other stuff aside because at long last we've finally got you to act on a very important crisis in this province.

**Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South):** I rise today as the transportation critic for the NDP caucus to say to the Minister of Transportation that his initiative is a step in the right direction.

To criticize the whole idea of trying to deal with the whole issue of truck safety and road safety I don't think would be a wise thing at this moment. This is a very serious issue. We've had a lot of people who have been killed on the highways across the province because of these incidents, and anything the government does towards trying to avert such tragedies from happening in the future needs to be applauded.

But I would say one thing on that particular point: I heard just recently, when you were making your statement, that you wanted to move quickly to pass this legislation through. There is a House leader within your government and I find it very surprising that the Minister of Transportation, on Friday, was able to go out and get a photo opportunity with the media, to yet again stand before the media to try to get some brownie points, but doesn't take the time to go sit with his House leader to



say that this is a serious issue for all Ontarians and that we need to find time within the legislative calendar so we're able to deal with this legislation forthwith to make sure we're doing something about this very serious issue.

I want to say on behalf of our caucus that we're more than prepared to sit down and discuss when this legislation will come through, how many days you want to set aside to make sure it goes through and how we do it in a way that is timely for the citizens of this province. If the minister can take the time to organize a press conference, I would think the minister would have the time to sit with his House leader to figure out when this legislation will go through.

I fear, however, given this government's agenda around the downloading, Bill 104 and the school boards, and megacity, that this legislation will not see the time of day probably until much further on in the legislation session. That's too bad because I think there is general agreement in this House to deal with this legislation, and I'm sure that if the Minister of Transportation were to put the energy into meeting with the House leader that he did into organizing his press conference on Friday, maybe we'd be able to get this particular piece of legislation to go forward.

Specific to that legislation, I just want to say I'm somewhat surprised that the government and the minister did not deal with the automatic roadside suspension. We heard the Minister of Transportation over and over again say that was a key element of what needed to be done in order to send a very serious message to the trucking companies out there. I see that it's not part of the package, and I wonder, is it going to be coming forward in the legislation? I don't think so. I think the minister needs to address that particular issue. I say to you, Minister, simply this: What we need from you is less photo opportunities; what we need from the Minister of Transportation is action.

1400

The minister comes into the House today with yet another announcement about how he's going to try to deal with truck safety, but the reality is that the wheels are still flying off the trucks. We still have a serious problem in this province where motorists are fearful every time they go out on the highways that yet another wheel is going to go flying on to the lane they are driving in and they'll possibly get killed.

I don't think the question of the fines is the entire answer to your problem. In fact, I was at a conference on road safety just last week in Ottawa, a conference held by CRASH, and a number of people within industry and other people who are interested in this issue had a very good discussion about what are some of the things we need to do. The consensus was that the fines are not the only answer, that there are other issues we need to take care of in order to address this problem. We need to go back and take a look at the issues of hours of work for the drivers themselves to make sure they're not driving rigs far past the point they're able to. We need to talk about driver training to make sure that drivers, when they go out in the morning, have the competence and the knowledge and the training to properly go around and inspect their vehicles and identify if a problem is going

to happen: Don't try to fix the problem later; fix it before it happens. We need to take a look at the whole issue of the certification process, that when trucks are inspected, it is properly done.

I say to the minister, if you're prepared to bring legislation to this House that deals with those other issues, I can tell you that my House leader, Mr Wildman, and I would imagine the opposition caucus, would be more than prepared to sit down with you and figure out a way that we're able to get this into the House and have people consult on it in the legislative process of committees so that people can have their say about how to deal with this.

In closing, I say to the government, we support generally what you're doing with the fines. However, I don't think it's the entire answer. I think the government and the Minister of Transportation have to stop thinking about photo ops and have to start dealing with the issue of truck safety. Once they're prepared to do that, I can tell you that the NDP caucus will be here with you.

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Member for Algoma.

**Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma):** If the government would stop trying to ram through 104 and 103, bills that the public doesn't want, and were seriously —

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

**Mrs Lyn McLeod (Fort William):** Mr Speaker, on a point of privilege. For you to be able to adjudicate on my point of privilege, I think it's important for you to know that at the committee hearings this morning on Bill 104, government members were presented with a piece of material by a Ministry of Education staff person, and the material contains, as we understand it, profiles on the private citizens who were making representations to the committee. We were at first informed that it was caucus services staff of the Conservatives who had prepared this. The parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Education subsequently said no, it was Ministry of Education personnel who had prepared the material, as indeed it was Ministry of Education personnel who distributed the material. We asked that it be tabled. The government members refused to table it, defeated a motion to table it.

What I'm asking you to determine as a point of privilege is, first of all, the appropriateness of using Ministry of Education staff to develop information background profiles on private citizens; secondly, if you consider that to be an appropriate use of ministry staff, is it not something which should be shared with all members, not only the members of the committee in the Legislature but those private citizens who are named in the list and who, understandably, want to know what is being kept on file about them?

**Mr Wildman:** On the same point, Mr Speaker, before you rule on this, I would like to point out that in answer to questioning in the legislative committee, the parliamentary assistant indicated that this material was profiles on presenters before the committee that had been prepared, apparently, by the Ministry of Education and Training staff. This led to a tremendous amount of consternation among the presenters, who wanted to know what information had been gathered, what this document said about



them, and they wanted the right to peruse that and know what it was about.

In the committee, I moved a motion that the document be tabled, and the majority on the committee voted it down. Is it appropriate that taxpayers' funds would, apparently, be used to develop dossiers on individual members of the public that would only be available to the government members and not to the opposition members on the committee and, frankly, not available to the public? This information was prepared with public funds. It should be available to anyone who wants to see it.

**The Speaker:** It's a tried precedent in the past with respect to committee hearings and disagreements or points of order or rules that get caught up at committees that the committee Chair is the person who would adjudicate those decisions. It's also a rule of this House for many years that decisions by the Chairs of committees are not appealable to the Speaker simply because —

**Mr Tony Silipo (Dovercourt):** They are, by the committee.

**The Speaker:** Pardon me. Yes, they are, but we've allowed the Chairs of the committees to make the decisions, and those decisions are established and stand.

As far as I'm concerned, I wasn't at the committee hearing and therefore it would be impossible for me to offer an opinion on whether it was in order or not in order. That's why we have the Chairs of committees. I can only suggest to the member opposite that if you would like a ruling on this point of order, if you haven't done so, make your appeal to the Chair of the committee. If you have done so, then the Chair has rendered a decision at that level, and in accepting the precedents and the practices that we have followed in this place, it's not acceptable for the Speaker then to start overruling decisions taken at committees by a Chair.

**Mrs McLeod:** But, Mr Speaker, I do believe this may be somewhat unprecedented, firstly. Secondly, there has been no ruling by the Chair of the committee, and the Chair can speak for herself, but I believe that would be seen to be outside the purview of the Chair of the committee and directly related to the relationship between members, the public and ministry staff.

**The Speaker:** I've got to say quite frankly I don't agree. It seems to me to be a perfectly acceptable approach to take to the Chair of the committee, and the committee can in fact rule; the Chair of that committee can rule.

**Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine):** You said it wasn't a point of order.

**The Speaker:** And you can stand on a point of order in the committee itself and make your appeal to the Chair, and then the Chair will render a decision, and that decision is much like my decisions in here: It's not appealable, and it can't be appealable to the Speaker; otherwise, as I said in the past, I would be here hearing points of order on decisions taken by Chairs at all our committees. So with that direction I can offer you, that's the direction I would take, and the Chair would in fact do that.

**Mr Wildman:** Why doesn't the minister just offer to table it here?

**The Speaker:** As far as the ministry, what they do, it's completely up to them. I don't know who the Chair of the committee is, but whoever it is will make a decision and I will not hear appeals to that decision in this place.

### SPEAKER'S RULING

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** I also have a ruling to read.

On Tuesday, February 18, 1997, the member for Windsor-Sandwich, Mrs Papatello, raised a point of privilege with respect to certain TV commercials paid for by the government of Ontario. The member alleged that a constituent had called the advertised number to receive information on the government's plans for health care and received instead a response package which appears to be from the Progressive Conservative Party. The member forwarded the documents to me along with some additional information. I note with interest that included in these documents is a membership form for the Progressive Conservative Party.

Let me begin by saying again that the Speaker has neither the resources nor the authority to conduct an investigation into these matters, and as I said on January 22 in this House, "I do not have the jurisdiction to examine the propriety of such campaigns unless they raise a matter of privilege or contempt." In essence, to paraphrase, I can't begin to investigate if this person in fact did phone that number, this was in fact sent to them in the response, and an investigation would in fact be necessary.

With respect to the television ads themselves, I previously ruled that the wording in them is general in nature and cannot be considered to be contemptuous.

As to the matter of the response package coming from the PC Party, while quite disturbing, it does not fall within the sphere of privilege. Neither can it be considered contempt, since it does not somehow cause the respect due to this House to be diminished.

Having said that, my personal views on this subject are clearly on the record, and while I cannot find that the member has a prima facie case of privilege, I understand fully your concerns.

**Mrs Sandra Papatello (Windsor-Sandwich):** Point of privilege.

**The Speaker:** I've ruled on that, so it's got to be a different point of privilege, because if it's the same one, then you'd be deemed to be challenging the Chair.

Point of privilege, the member for Windsor-Sandwich.

**Mrs Papatello:** Thank you, Speaker, for that ruling. My question to the Speaker would be, considering that based on your analysis you find it quite disturbing, could you recommend where then we would take it?

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**The Speaker:** With due respect, it's not my job to direct opposition or government members where to take concerns and issues. I'm looking for "quite disturbing" in here and I can't find it.

**Mrs Papatello:** I'm paraphrasing.

**The Speaker:** Paraphrasing me? I sometimes find that gets me into trouble, when people start paraphrasing.

Let me just say to you, I understand your concerns. I can't direct you as to where you should go or shouldn't



go. But I know full well that you have very able leadership in your caucus and a very able House leader. If you consulted with them, I'm sure, without any discussion, they would tell you where to go.

*Laughter.*

**Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines):** Thank you for the compliment, Mr Speaker. We are confronted with this situation which the member draws to your attention. I know you've partially dealt with it previously. We have a situation where we have debates going on in this House, debates going on in our society. One group that is debating, the government, has taken it upon itself to spend taxpayers' dollars through three different ministries to have the Premier on television giving a clearly partisan message. The opposition doesn't have that same privilege. We don't have the money that the ministries have to put out this message. Somebody somewhere has to take this on. We haven't seen the editorials on it yet, but somewhere they're going to come along.

**The Speaker:** To the member for St Catharines, you're probably right in the sense that it's probably a good point to make during question period. As a point of privilege I have ruled on it; as contempt I have ruled on it. I think you've come to me and have exhausted the avenues available through my office. All that's left is, again, your option.

## ORAL QUESTIONS

### HOSPITAL RESTRUCTURING

**Mr Joseph Cordiano (Lawrence):** My question is to the Premier. This morning your handpicked hospital closing commission decided to hack \$90 million out of health care in Ottawa by closing four hospitals — this despite your promise, a Mike Harris promise, not to close hospitals and despite local plans to find the money to pay for your tax cut without closing any hospitals; this also despite a Mike Harris commitment on May 3, 1995, that "local health care communities will share in any savings identified locally for reinvestment in community priorities." You're taking \$126 million out of health care in Ottawa and reinvesting only \$36 million. That means you are stealing \$90 million out of the pockets of people in Ottawa and out of health care in Ottawa. That's stealing, not sharing.

You've broken your promise not to close hospitals, Premier. Will you keep your promise and guarantee that every single penny from those hospital closures stays in Ottawa?

**Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier):** I'd like to welcome back the Minister of Health, who I know can respond to it.

*Applause.*

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** You understand that you've now got 30 seconds left to answer the question.

**Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Health):** I imagine I won't be getting much applause in the near future so I might as well enjoy that 30 seconds' worth.

The honourable member knows full well that it was his government that began the process of asking hospitals to find efficiencies and began the process of laying the foundation to amalgamate hospitals to ensure that we drive every dollar towards front-line patient services. That is what's occurring in Ottawa-Carleton today as a result of the commission's interim findings and conclusions. As you know — and the honourable member is welcome to be part of the process — there's a 30-day process now where the public can comment on the findings of the commission, and certainly the government will be commenting on the restructuring report at the appropriate time.

**Mr Cordiano:** It is clear that the resurrection of the health minister means there are no different answers to the problems we're facing in health care. Whether it's Jim Wilson or Marilyn Mushinski, your plan is the same: Close hospitals, lay off nurses, bring in new user fees, take money from community health care to pay for your tax cut.

It's clear that your failure to reinvest that \$90 million in Ottawa means that people will suffer. There will be fewer nurses, longer waiting lists and even more horror stories of people tied to chairs and people unattended and going unnoticed, dying in the hallways of our hospitals right across this province.

Minister, you and your government and your Premier are responsible for this. You can't get away from the responsibility of this. Do you not realize that every dollar you cut from hospitals and fail to reinvest means we're going to receive second-rate, substandard health care in this province? That's on your head, Minister.

**Hon Mr Wilson:** The honourable member answers his own question when he points out some of the problems we have today in an unstructured hospital system in this province. Almost 10,000 beds were closed when the Liberals were in power and when the NDP was in power, but you left all the administration there, all the building maintenance, all the heat and hydro — money today that must be spent on patient services.

At the end of the day we want to make sure that we have modern hospitals. Yes, there will be fewer buildings, but the buildings that remain will have more nurses, more services, will be modern hospitals with the latest technology and drug therapies. That's the goal of this government; that's the goal of the very good people on the commission and the district health councils. We want to drive every dollar to patient services and away from administration, duplication and waste in the system.

**Mr Cordiano:** Let's be clear about what you're doing, Minister. What this amounts to is nothing short of dismantling our health care system. Why? Because in Ottawa you're cutting \$90 million that could pay for the quality of care patients deserve, for more nurses, care for our seniors, community care, and the list goes on. You're not doing that. You're taking money out and you're not putting it back in. That's the bottom line here.

The only guarantee the people of Ottawa have that you're going to do anything after you've closed their hospitals is to hope and pray you're going to do something to reinvest those dollars.



Minister, can you give the people of Ottawa an unequivocal guarantee that every cent of that \$90 million you've stolen away from the people of Ottawa for health care will go back into the community to be reinvested in community-based care? That's the guarantee the people of Ottawa are looking for. That's what we're looking for today as an opposition party, as Liberals. We want you to guarantee that you're going to reinvest those dollars in community-based care, for more nurses, for more care for our seniors —

**The Speaker:** Thank you, member. Minister?

**Hon Mr Wilson:** The honourable member is in error. The government's record is very clear with respect to reinvestments in health care.

Two facts: One is that the health care budget is up substantially this year from the time we came to office, and it's certainly several hundred million dollars more than what the Liberal Party was planning on spending on health care should they have formed the government in the last election.

Second, we haven't seen a great deal of the savings yet that are to be derived from restructuring, but without seeing those savings the government has already invested some \$600 million in Ottawa-Carleton and throughout the health care system in our province. Ottawa-Carleton, for example, was one of the first areas of the province to benefit from the reinvestment in paramedic services and the special treatments now available from our ambulance services; long-term care; nursing homes; tremendous investments we've made in Ottawa-Carleton, and the commission is recommending that we make more reinvestments.

The government's record on reinvestment is second to none in this country. We've spent far more new dollars on health care than anything we've seen in savings to date and we intend to keep that record because we're proud of that record.

**The Speaker:** New question.

**Mr Gerard Kennedy (York South):** My question is also to the new or slightly used Minister of Health.

*Interjections.*

**Mr Kennedy:** I'm sorry the truth bothers the members opposite.

I'd like to ask you, Minister, about your hired guns, the restructuring commission, who walked into Ottawa today and closed four hospitals; one in Brockville; closing the hospitals before in Thunder Bay and Sudbury; draft orders for closings in Pembroke and Lambton. They're doing this for one reason: because you took away \$1.3 billion. That's a dramatic change in how health care has ever been done and it's your change.

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Tell us today why you believe that this restructuring and these cuts will not hurt patients. What evidence, what studies do you have that this isn't going to be harmful to sick Ontarians today? Tell us, Minister.

**Hon Mr Wilson:** We're fortunate in Ontario that we are the last to restructure our health care system. We have very concrete examples from governments throughout this country, governments of different political stripes covering the spectrum of politics in this country, where each has taken the tough decisions to make their health

care system better. They've modernized their hospitals. They have the newest drug therapies available. They've made tremendous reinvestments in long-term care and community-based services.

We're on that road today, and it's a road that I hope the honourable members will join us in because you're all on record as agreeing with the need to restructure the hospitals. Your government, Mr Kennedy, and the NDP spent \$26.6 million on some 60 studies. The fact of the matter is that the time for study is over. The commission is acting, and the government will follow through with the reinvestments so we have a world-class health care system in this province.

**Mr Kennedy:** Minister, we know what road you're on. The road you're on leads to lousy health care. That's the road you're taking us down.

I have in front of me a confidential document prepared by your ministry showing clearly that your cut of \$1.3 billion was determined first and then the studies were being — the studies, contrary to what you've said, are still happening. You've cut too much far too fast, and it's hurt patients and you know it.

This document comes from the fiscal working-planning group of the JPPC — their group of hospitals — and your ministry looking at your cuts. It went to your deputy minister on January 10, and it says: "We have concluded that even with the most aggressive utilization, management and organizational consolidation, the hospital industry will not be able to achieve the \$1.3 billion in transfer payment reductions within the three-year time frame." They say it will hurt health care, and you have known this, your ministry has known this.

Will you not admit today to the people of Ontario, the people of Ottawa, that you've been reckless with health care, you don't have a plan, and your own experts are telling you that you cannot make these cuts without hurting the people of Ontario?

**Hon Mr Wilson:** We're listening very carefully to the Ontario Hospital Association, its president David MacKinnon, and hospital administration and front-line workers throughout the province. In fact, I spent Friday and all day today meeting with administrators.

The fact of the matter is we'll look very carefully at year three of the savings. But no one — no one, I say to all honourable members — is indicating that this government should stop in its efforts to restructure the system or that we should stop our efforts, along with the commission and with the local district health councils, local people, who want to see their health care systems bettered. The fact that examples are raised in this House from time to time — and examples have been raised over the last decade — about patients who don't receive the care they should receive in a world-class health care system speaks volumes to the fact that we need to restructure the system. There is no choice. You cannot turn back the clock.

We will listen very carefully as we proceed to everyone in the system to ensure that we do it right and that we end up driving every dollar to patient care, because the patients come first in our system, and they'll always come first in our system.



**Mr Kennedy:** With the greatest respect, this minister is not listening at all. This minister had information — his ministry had it; his interim, predecessor minister had it — models have been done by his ministry working with the hospitals, and what they show is that you knew last year that \$130 million of cuts is coming right out of the hides of patients, that it's hurting people in this province, and that by the end of next year it will be \$290 million that can't be achieved either through operational efficiencies or clinical efficiencies. You knew this. And by next year it will be \$400 million. Your own advisers are telling you this. You knew even as the cuts went forward this year and you know even as you stand there today that these are hurting patients, \$300 million worth of hurt. Your own people have documented it.

Will you stand in your place today and tell us that you'll stop until you figure out what you're doing?

**Hon Mr Wilson:** I'll say to the honourable member that we are listening very, very carefully and very sincerely to all our partners in the health care system and in the hospital system. But if you're a cardiac patient today or a dialysis patient today or if you're being transported by an ambulance throughout this province today, you have better services than one year ago. You have better services. In fact, in Ottawa-Carleton and in other parts of the province where we've announced the money to make the investment in dialysis, where we've opened up clinics across the province, today people in many parts who need our health care system are receiving better care because of the reinvestments this government has made.

We will not be deterred from making further investments in patients and driving dollars away from administration. All the money we have cannot be wasted any more on empty beds and empty rooms and half-empty hospitals. The money has to be driven to the front lines so we'll have more nurses, modern hospitals, new technologies and an absolutely world-class health care system. That's our goal and we'll be looking to you to help us reach that goal.

**The Speaker:** New question.

**Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre):** My question is to the Minister of Health. Minister, you can hardly be surprised that the people of Ontario are confused and fearful about the actual objectives of your hospital restructuring scheme. You've announced reductions of \$1.3 billion in hospital funding across the province; that's 18% of total hospital budgets. Yet the chair of the restructuring committee, Duncan Sinclair, said on November 6 that there was far more than \$1.3 billion that could come out of hospital restructuring.

We understand that the Ottawa-Carleton Regional District Health Council was told prior to the release of the report that the objective of the commission was in fact a 30% reduction in hospital budgets, this despite the fact that the commission chair has said on other occasions that he has not been given any savings targets and that the commission will concentrate on making the hospital system work better rather than meeting artificial dollar targets.

Minister, you have to realize that the people of Ontario are not stupid. They hear these conflicting things. They

want to know from you, why are you jeopardizing their health in order to finance your phoney tax scheme?

**Hon Mr Wilson:** The chair of the restructuring commission, Dr Duncan Sinclair, has made it very clear that he's not driven by any fiscal agenda. The test the commission has made for itself is that quality must be maintained or improved, that access must be maintained or improved, that the system has to be affordable so we can sustain it for many more years, for those generations of Ontarians who will become senior citizens in the next few years and decades, and that we have a world-class system, an excellent system there to look after those ever-increasing needs of the population.

I'm a little confused by the honourable member's question. The commission is not driven by any sort of fiscal plan; it is driven by a genuine concern for the system and a genuine concern that we improve the quality and the access to our health care system.

**Mrs Boyd:** Minister, I'm not questioning your intention; I'm just questioning the reality of what's happening. Let's look at the report the commission released in Ottawa-Carleton today. It's going to take another \$126 million out of health care in that region. You've already taken \$71 million out of the hospitals and \$3 million out of home care, which is supposed to be the alternative. That's over \$200 million in health care dollars taken from that region, with absolutely no commitment on your part about reinvestment. The few little programs you talk about are nothing compared to what's being removed from this region, and you have not made any commitment to the necessary community-based alternatives. You yourself told the committee on October 1, "In order to do restructuring, you've got to do the investments up front." That's what the commission is saying; that's what the government is trying to respond to.

Minister, you've now got the savings, over \$200 million of savings. Will you make a commitment today to live up to those words that you gave the legislative committee last year and make that reinvestment announcement today?

**Hon Mr Wilson:** I'm very happy to once again reiterate the government's commitment to reinvesting in health care. The honourable member points out that we found savings of \$200 million. The facts are clear that we've invested over \$600 million new dollars into health care, in the time we've been in office, into new services. The record is very clear.

1430

Could I just point out for a moment that in some areas like Thunder Bay and other parts of the province where the commission has already made findings, Windsor for example, we do not have a waiting list today for community-based services. In Thunder Bay we don't have a waiting list for the home care and community-based services. The money will be there when the customers are there. But right now there isn't any place to invest in Thunder Bay. I check all the time — I know the previous minister did too — with our area offices to make sure that people are being served. They're being served very well, and the waiting lists are almost non-existent for most of the home care services in the areas



that have already undergone restructuring or are undergoing restructuring.

As we find savings in the system, we will invest every dollar back into patients and in fact our record is —

**The Speaker:** Thank you, Minister. Final supplementary.

**Mrs Boyd:** Quite frankly, everybody understands that this is rhetoric, that this is a sham. You're cutting the hospital budgets before you do the reinvestment. You're placing the commissioner in place to take the political heat off you and your government. What your rhetoric is all about is an integrated system, but in fact that's not the reality out there, and again and again the communities that are affected are explaining that to you.

The commission doesn't have the power to reinvest the dollars; only you do. The commission has said in Ottawa-Carleton that it will cost \$106.4 million in capital reinvestment to accomplish the savings they've put forward. The Ottawa-Carleton district health council recommended a reinvestment package of \$57 million to create an integrated health care system. That would include community-based health care, including hospices, community health centres and community home care.

It's up to you today to commit to these very worried people that you are in fact going to reinvest those dollars that have been recommended by the very commission and the district health council that you put in place to make the recommendations. Will you make that commitment today?

**Hon Mr Wilson:** The government's record to date in the hospital restructuring, along with the commission, is very clear. We've made the reinvestments the commission has asked for, and as we have more customers for long-term care services and that, the government has the money; we made that clear in the budgets of the government. We're spending more money on health care than when you were in office, certainly more money than the Liberal Party was going to spend if it formed the government.

We're spending 6% more on health care per person in Ontario than any other province in Canada. We want to spend that money as effectively and as wisely as possible. We want modern hospitals with the newest technologies. We want fewer buildings, but more nurses and more services in the buildings that remain, so that we can serve more people and help people when they need those services in their lives. That's what we're all about in restructuring. That's what the commission's all about. Yes, we will make those reinvestments. Once we've done the review of the commission's findings, you'll hear about those reinvestments. We'll look after the employees and we'll look after all those people who need health care services in Ottawa-Carleton.

**The Speaker:** New question.

**Mrs Boyd:** Again to the Minister of Health: Minister, I don't think there are any people in this Legislature or even in the province who disagree with the fine words around restructuring that constantly come out of your mouth and your predecessor's mouth. Restructuring, we all know, has to happen, but the reality is you're taking the money out first. There is no guarantee it's going to be reinvested in the communities from which it's taken.

There is no guarantee to the people in those communities that their health care is going to be protected by your government. That's the reality.

There has been 18% cut from hospital budgets and you say you've reinvested. There is absolutely nothing in those communities to show their health care is protected. Surely you're aware there is a growing public concern that completely drowns out your fine words.

Minister, your response has been to try and put it off and say people are complaining because they don't want to restructure. Once and for all, let us be clear. Everyone understands there has to be restructuring, but something has to be put in place before you take the health care dollars away. Will you commit to that?

**Hon Mr Wilson:** The government's commitment is clear to making the reinvestments. We made the largest single investment in the history of health care late last year with \$170 million for new long-term-care services, creating 4,400 new jobs for nurses and other front-line providers in homemaking and home care services in the province. We haven't been able to spend all of the \$170 million, because frankly we don't have waiting lists in Windsor, we don't have waiting lists in Thunder Bay, we don't have waiting lists in Simcoe county for those services. As the population grows older and needs those services and as we do more on an outpatient basis, that money is available.

A total of \$600 million has been invested in health care since this government came to office. That's far more dollars than anything we've seen in savings to date. We're proud of our record and we're going to keep going.

**Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor-Sandwich):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: This minister, new as he is today, must not be up to date in terms of the services required in Windsor. He cannot get away with giving this kind of information, which is simply inaccurate.

**The Speaker:** That's not a point of order.

**Mrs Boyd:** It may however be a point of rhetoric, and that is exactly our point. The rhetoric sounds good. The reality that the people of Ontario are facing in their communities, in their hospitals, is very different than your rhetoric. That's not the reality that we're facing.

Minister, you said in response to one of my colleague's questions here that you've been listening. Listening without action is not worth anything. When are you going to respond to the recommendations of your own commission to the Ontario Hospital Association, all of the health care professionals who have spoken to you, and actually begin to show us that the words you use about reinvestment in health care are more than words, that in fact the reality is going to be that at the end of the day this restructuring will accomplish a better health care system and not the chaos and the fear and the distrust that is out there now among the people of Ontario?

**Hon Mr Wilson:** Let me just remind the member of some of the significant reinvestments we've made to date since coming to office, for a total of \$684,948,000: \$170 million in new long-term-care services for the province; \$43 million for high-growth-area hospitals this year; \$25 million last year for high-growth hospitals; \$14 million in a special fund for recognizing the needs of northern



Ontario hospitals; \$59.4 million, almost \$60 million, for Thunder Bay restructuring; \$18 million for the cancer centre in Windsor; \$13 million for emergency on-call fees for doctors in the province; \$45 million in some 367 new drugs listed to the seniors and social assistance drug plan — that's in contrast to the over 250 drugs you took off the seniors drug plan. We've added hundreds of new drugs, \$45 million in new dollars in that program alone, or a total of almost \$700 million in new health care spending in the province.

**Mrs Boyd:** It sounds familiar, Minister, and I must say your vacation has not done you any harm, because you've picked up the tape and you're running with it again. We've heard this again and again and again, and it does not speak to the reality that patients and their families are facing throughout this province. You have not listened to the stories of people who have actually been patients — victims, I was going to say — of the health care system as it exists under your ministry. You know these words are wearing very thin and you are going to be held responsible. To talk about reinvestment, as you did in that list, of things that are already in the budget, already part of the projected budget, certainly in long-term care are part of the projected budget, is simply — how can I say this so that the Speaker won't get excited — window dressing.

**Interjection:** Creative accounting.

**Mrs Boyd:** Creative accounting. Thank you. It is extremely difficult for people who are experiencing the reality of the health care system to believe you. Minister, please, today, stand in your place and commit to the people of Ottawa-Carleton and all the other centres that have been affected.

**Hon Mr Wilson:** I reiterate the government's commitment to make the investments that are needed in Ottawa-Carleton as the restructuring proceeds. The fact that we have problems in some of our hospitals today, the fact that individual cases get raised in the Legislature from time to time tells me and tells the members of the government and tells anyone in the province that's listening that there's a need to restructure the system.

There's a need to change the way we do things and to drive more dollars to those front-line services. The patient always comes first. That's the goal of the health care system. We're making that a reality through our reinvestments and we're going to continue to listen very carefully to the people of Ontario to ensure that we reinvest the dollars saved back into priority areas that are identified as we move forward with restructuring in the province.

#### SCHOOL BOARDS

**Mrs Lyn McLeod (Fort William):** My question is for the Premier. Hundreds and hundreds of people who want to make you understand their concerns about the educational bill that your minister is bringing forward now believe that even the very limited public hearings that you have allowed are a complete and total sham. As you will know, only a small number of the more than 1,150 people who wanted to make their concerns known in Toronto have been able to be heard, yet your government seems to be intimidated even by these few.

It is incredible that the Minister of Education's need for control is so great that he has now asked Ministry of Education staff to prepare profiles of those who are presenting at the committee or in public forums. It is even more incredible that the minister and the government members are not prepared to make those profiles and the background information available to the people whose names are on the list.

1440

Premier, I can tell you that private citizens don't like knowing that their government is collecting information on them —

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Question.

**Mrs McLeod:** — and they particularly don't like having that information kept secret to government members. I ask whether or not, Premier, you condone the keeping —

**The Speaker:** Thank you, member for Fort William. Premier?

**Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier):** I think the Minister of Education —

**Hon John Snobelen (Minister of Education and Training):** Let me be very clear about one thing, and that is that this government is very proud of Bill 104, very proud of restructuring education, very proud of moving some money out of bureaucracy, out of duplication and reducing the number of politicians involved in our education system. We are very proud of that.

Bill 104 of course results from the actions that have happened over the course —

**Interjections.**

**The Speaker:** Minister of Education?

**Hon Mr Snobelen:** — over the course of a number of years including the Sweeney commission, which took 20,000 submissions. We will of course engage in a public dialogue about the bill over the course of the next few weeks and we'll bring in all written submissions possible and consider all of those to make sure this is the best bill possible.

On the subject the member opposite brings up today about some sort of list, I'm unaware of the list but I will ask my staff to bring it to me. If there's anything untoward about it, I will make sure that it's released.

**The Speaker:** Supplementary?

**Mr Mike Colle (Oakwood):** To the Premier, I have another list here: 44 top staffers in your office, in key ministers' offices, municipal affairs and other key departments, who have tried to intervene in the referendum process in the city of Toronto. You've tried to discredit the referendum process. You said you would ignore it, you would not listen to people. Do you condone the attempt of these 44 staffers to intervene and disrupt the referendum process in the city of Toronto?

**Hon Mr Snobelen:** I'm surprised that the member opposite would direct that question to me, but I know my colleague the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing would be more than happy to respond.

**Hon Al Leach (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing):** I'm aware of this situation only from what I've read in the media, but it's my understanding that a member of city council was so concerned about the biased way in which the referendum was being held in



the city of Toronto that he wanted to try and ensure there was scrutiny of the ballot box on the day of the election. He approached a number of individuals throughout the community and asked them to take part in that process to ensure that the integrity of that process was protected. It was the decision of various individuals, from whatever walk of life, to take part in that process. It's up to them, it's an individual decision, and by the way, none of them were from my ministry, to the best of my knowledge.

#### FIRE SAFETY

**Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold):** I've got a question of the Premier. You made a commitment to firefighters across this province and to the communities that they serve that there would be no changes to firefighting legislation without thorough consultation with those very same firefighters. You made a promise to firefighters like these and their sisters and brothers across this province and to their communities that you would consult with them. You did it and Bill 84 is now scheduled for second reading vote. Why did you break your promise to these firefighters, to their families and their communities?

**Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier):** I know the Solicitor General can respond.

**Hon Robert W. Runciman (Solicitor General and Minister of Correctional Services):** The act that is before the House and will be voted on in terms of second reading later today has been the product of extensive consultations over many years. This is the first change in one half century. In 1989, under the Liberal government, the fire services review was begun. This involved all of the unions, the chiefs, the various associations and all the stakeholders in the fire community.

We've had extensive discussion in this House and we're going to have public hearings across this province. My door continues to be open in terms of sitting down with the firefighters' associations. I've made that offer and I hope to follow up on that with a meeting with the various associations in the very near future. We're willing to continue to consult. I've indicated on a number of occasions that we're prepared to listen with respect to their concerns and the possibility of amendments during the hearings process.

**Mr Kormos:** These firefighters up here in the gallery are shaking their heads in distress and disgust at this response because they know, and their sisters and brothers, their colleagues in every community large and small across this province know, that there was no consultation with these or their sister and brother firefighters. They know that the Premier broke his promise. They know that your door has been locked, bolted and barred to them and other professional firefighters.

Minister, you should know that it takes a full-time firefighter four years to become a first-class firefighter where he or she is then ready for any kind of emergency. You're not going to get that kind of experience on a part-time basis. Why, with your Bill 84, are you going to permit full-time professional firefighters to be replaced with part-timers who have far less training and experience and who are going to as a result of that put our commun-

ities and their members' and their families' lives and safety at risk? Why are you doing that?

**Hon Mr Runciman:** I would say, to be polite, that is alarmist at the very least. Indeed this government, through Bill 84, will be enhancing public safety. I believe strongly we'll be enhancing public safety through the initiatives under Bill 84.

We talk about training. About 18,000 of the 26,000 firefighters in this province are volunteers. I think the comment that the member opposite makes reflects badly on the volunteers who give of their time freely to protect communities right across this province. That is really what you're saying. I have nothing but the utmost respect for professional firefighters in this province, nothing but the utmost respect, but also for volunteer firefighters who donate their time.

With respect to part-time, again I believe the member is being alarmist. I think part-timers are going to assist in many of the smaller municipalities which cannot afford a full-time firefighter for prevention matters. They can go out and do those kinds of duties where they simply do not have the ability to cover that with a full-time professional firefighter.

Again, I believe what we're doing through Bill 84 —

**The Speaker:** Thank you very much, Minister. New question.

#### SCHOOL BOARDS

**Mr Jim Brown (Scarborough West):** My question is to the Minister of Education and Training. I attended a public forum on education at Winston Churchill Collegiate in Scarborough last week. A flyer advertising the meeting had been distributed to all students on school time. It's entitled "Urgent Notice to Students." It makes several allegations about Bill 104 that really are anti-government propaganda. Parents have contacted my office to say they send their children to school to learn math, literacy and critical thinking, not union politics.

At another town hall meeting I had last week, a parent came to me to question why a music teacher at Wexford Collegiate in Scarborough would ask all the students to write a letter to you, Minister, condemning cuts that would cancel or hurt the music program. The 16-year-old did not want to write this letter, nor did her mother want to complain to school authorities for fear of reprisal.

Minister, how is it that paid public employees can use the classroom as a soapbox for union politics and anti-government propaganda?

1450

**Hon John Snobelen (Minister of Education and Training):** Let's be very clear: I don't think it's right to politicize the classroom. I know most people in this chamber would agree that it's not right to do that.

**Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines):** What about the Premier on television?

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** I want to warn the member for St Catharines that you must come to order.

**Hon Mr Snobelen:** I guess I stand corrected. Perhaps with some individuals in this chamber it's okay to



politicize the classroom. It certainly is not with me and it's certainly not all right with my colleagues.

I've raised this issue with Mr Earl Manners, who is the president of the OSSTF. I asked him to reconsider his actions, and so far I'm disappointed to report that Mr Manners has not changed his position.

I am pleased to note, though, that the Ontario Secondary School Students' Association issued a statement last week condemning this kind of action in the classroom. I am convinced that at the end of the day the majority of the hardworking professional teachers in this province simply won't allow the classroom to be politicized.

**Mr Jim Brown:** The document I mentioned claims that Bill 104 will cause cuts of \$450 million. It further states that this alleged cut of \$450 million threatens adult education, English as a second language and special education. It goes on to say that Metro's 20,000 teachers may be reduced through outsourcing extra class responsibilities and increases in class size.

Minister, the document seems to be fearmongering over possible decisions that future amalgamated school boards might make. How do you respond to those accusations?

**Hon Mr Snobelen:** I thank the honourable member for bringing this subject up in the House today. I want to make it very clear to my colleagues across the floor that Bill 104 has absolutely nothing to do with the funding of education; it has a lot to do with the ending of waste and duplication and the reduction of the number of politicians in our school system.

**Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South):** He is misleading the House.

**The Speaker:** Member for Cochrane South, I ask that you withdraw that comment, please.

**Mr Bisson:** I withdraw.

**The Speaker:** Minister of Education.

**Hon Mr Snobelen:** Bill 104 has an awful lot to do with ending that waste and duplication, with taking out a layer of politicians from the education system and preparing us to make the changes we need to improve student achievement in the future.

On the funding subject I'm very happy to talk to people, because this government is committed to a funding model that's been suggested to previous governments that they haven't had the courage to act on.

The province has taken the responsibility for funding education to make sure there are no second-class students in this province.

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker:** Order. I caution the members for Hamilton Centre and Sudbury to come to order, please.

**Hon Mr Snobelen:** At the end of the day, when we have finished with our consultations on the funding system, I can assure the members of this House and the people of Ontario that we will meet the needs of every single individual student right across Ontario.

## JUSTICE SYSTEM

**Ms Annamarie Castrilli (Downsview):** My question is for the Attorney General. I have on numerous occasions risen in this House to indicate the community's

concern with the growing backlog in the criminal court system. In response the Attorney General, on November 5, announced a prosecution blitz. It seems now, four months later, that we are no better off. In fact the situation is quite alarming. That's partly because the Attorney General allowed no new moneys to go into the system as he announced his blitz.

We now have a situation where offenders are being released into our streets and into our neighbourhoods, and it is really of concern.

I'd just like to cite a couple of examples. I don't intend to be alarmist at all, but we are very concerned. Justice Howden threw out a burglary case in Newmarket; Justice McIsaac threw out charges of theft, again in Newmarket; Justice Stong dismissed a Whitby sexual assault case; Justice Hill threw out theft charges in Brampton; Justice Salhany recently threw out sexual interference due to court delays.

My question to the Attorney General is this: What is he prepared to do about it? The public is concerned. When is he going to instil some real money —

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Thank you, member. Attorney General?

**Hon Charles Harnick (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs):** One of the reasons we've had a long-standing difficulty with backlogs in our criminal courts is because between 1985 and 1990, the Supreme Court of Canada repeatedly warned the then Liberal government to deal with this problem. They didn't, and that government was directly responsible for 70,000 cases being dismissed.

That problem has continued in spite of the Martin report. I have announced blitz courts in six jurisdictions. We've set up nine additional courts in heavily backlogged areas. We've appointed 25 more crown attorneys to deal with backlog issues. We are seeing, in four of the six courts where we've set up backlog reviews, reductions in numbers already. I might tell you that when we took over as the government, this problem existed then; it has marginally increased since that time, and we are now reversing that trend for the first time in 10 years in the province.

**Ms Castrilli:** That response is totally unworthy of an Attorney General who I believe cares about the justice system of this province. Let's look at the facts. You have reduced the number of crown attorneys; you have slashed funding of your own ministry to the tune of \$116 million. That's the reality. That's what's causing the backlog. In the East Mall court alone, there are 14,000 cases pending; 50% of the cases in Metro Toronto are on the critical list, having been in the system for over eight months.

Will you call, at the very least, for an emergency round table discussion to solve this problem and inject some new funding into the system to protect the public?

**Hon Mr Harnick:** We have put \$2 million into the backlog blitz. I might tell the member that the total reduction of the criminal system was 0.4% of the ministry's overall budget. I can also tell you that in terms of court administration, the reduction on a per-courthouse basis around the province, any reductions have been less than 1% per courthouse.



What we are doing is attacking a backlog problem by a concerted court blitz for the first time in 10 years. I can tell you that when we took office there were 145,000 cases in the backlog. There are now 165,000. I might tell you that most of those cases, the vast majority of those cases, are there because defence counsel has agreed to waive the eight-month limitation.

There is not a crisis, but there is indeed a real effort being made on a day-to-day basis to make sure the backlog is reduced. We're putting money into it; we're seeing good numbers already and it's working.

### SCHOOL BOARDS

**Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma):** I have a question of the Minister of Education and Training regarding the anti-democratic approach of his government with regard to his so-called education reform.

Does the minister know the consternation with which his so-called reforms are greeted by members of the public: parents, trustees, teachers and everyone involved in the education community? Could the minister explain why, with this amalgamation of boards, his government is taking such a different approach from the previous government, the Conservative government in 1968, that also amalgamated boards?

Why is it that this government apparently has dossiers on people that it will not publicize? Why is it that this government is appointing a commission whose decisions can't be appealed even to a court, a commission that is holding up construction in Peel, in his own area? Why is there this approach, which is so undemocratic, this time around?

**Hon John Snobelen (Minister of Education and Training):** To the member for Algoma, I guess this government is acting on the same kind of advice, on the same kind of popular opinion, on the same thoughts of people across the province that your government acted on when it appointed the Sweeney commission to take the number of boards in Ontario to half, which is exactly what this government is doing.

What perhaps surprises the member opposite is that we are actually taking action to improve the education system in the province. It is not anti-democratic. In fact, there are elected trustees now; there will be elected trustees in 1998. We have the Education Improvement Commission, of which we've announced the co-chairs, and I'm sure you'd approve of those people; they're very honourable people. We have asked them to help us in that transition period from an old, wasteful system to a new system that will help us lift student achievement right across the province. That's where we're going as a government, that's where we're going as a province, and I'm proud of the bill.

1500

**Mr Wildman:** With respect, the Sweeney commission did not recommend this kind of approach in process, and neither did former Premier Davis need a commission with these kinds of extraordinary powers when he amalgamated boards and set up the county boards in 1968.

Since the minister says he is in favour of democracy, can he guarantee that the commission, in making its

decisions around merging collective agreements, for instance — that employee rights will be recognized and respected, and that successor rights for employees, teacher and non-teacher, will be guaranteed in the process?

**Hon Mr Snobelen:** Of course this government will meet its obligations, but it will do that so as to end a system that your government failed to end, a system where there are 129 mini-ministries of education, a system that would not allow us to get to the future of education that we want for our students, a system which produced mediocre student results which are not okay with me, not okay with my colleagues, and which we will improve and improve dramatically and improve immediately. That is what we're moving forward to.

### LABOUR ISSUES

**Mr Ted Chudleigh (Halton North):** My question is for the Minister of Labour, and it concerns a meeting she attended recently with federal, provincial and territorial ministers of labour in Hull, Quebec, earlier this month on February 10 and 11. I wonder if the minister could update this House on the substance of those discussions.

**Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Labour):** I'd be very pleased to comment about the meeting that took place with my provincial counterparts as well as the federal Minister of Labour. I was quite pleased to see that there was certainly a lot of consensus about the direction that labour ministers were heading across Canada. I think there was a recognition that we were seeing a changing workplace, we were seeing a changing employer-employee relationship, and as a result, we discussed changes to the Employment Standards Act. As you know, I will be introducing a review of that act this spring. We discussed the fact that many of them were looking at similar reviews.

We took a look at occupational health and safety, and I guess what probably impressed me the most was the sincere commitment on the part of all of the individuals there to commit to making their workplaces as safe as they possibly could be.

**Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre):** No shame.

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** The third issue that certainly was of concern and interest was the federal bankruptcy act, and so we did address the issue of changes to the act.

**Mr Christopherson:** You cut the wage protection program.

**Mr Chudleigh:** If the member opposite is finished, the minister mentioned the need to improve federal bankruptcy and insolvency legislation. Could you expand on this issue, especially as it relates to employees of bankrupt companies?

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** At the present time, workers across Canada do not have secured creditor status under the federal Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act. Unfortunately, there is no protection for workers anywhere in Canada. They are not —

**Mr Christopherson:** Tell us how much you care. You gutted the wage protection program.



**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** The member for Hamilton Centre, I'm warning you to come to order.

**Mr Christopherson:** She's very provocative.  
*Interjections.*

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** My colleagues find it interesting that I would be considered provocative. However, I shall continue that there was consensus. I had originally written a letter to the federal minister asking that employees be given preferred status under the act. This was supported by my colleagues across the Dominion of Canada. Unfortunately, I regret to inform you that the federal government will not be making any changes to the legislation, and so unfortunately our workers will not be protected and they will not have preferred status.

**Ms Shelley Martel (Sudbury East):** They were protected until you gutted the program. You gutted the plan.

**The Speaker:** Member for Sudbury East, come to order, please. New question.

### JOB CREATION

**Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt):** My question is to the Premier, and the issue is jobs. The Premier will know that last week the government released its report on jobs, and it says Ontario loses 7,000 jobs in January. It spells out that in the last five months, Ontario has actually lost 37,000 jobs while the rest of Canada has gained 72,000 jobs. For all of us, it's an extremely disappointing job performance over the last five months.

We've been trying for the last few days to get an explanation from the government of what's happened: Why has Ontario lost 37,000 jobs over the last five months while the rest of Canada has gained 72,000 jobs? Certainly for the people of Ontario, that's an extremely important question.

I'm sure, Premier, you've asked the same question. What is the explanation of why Ontario has lost 37,000 jobs over the last five months?

**Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier):** I think that most objective economists and reporters realize by now that you use figures very selectively to create a totally inaccurate picture, so let's review the facts.

In 1996, Ontario created 90,000 private sector jobs, 56% of the national total created right here in Ontario. Ontario, in 1996, also created 82% of the new retail and wholesale trade jobs in Canada, 73% of the net new manufacturing jobs in Canada. If you take the statistics — and everybody knows you can take numbers and put them any way you want and come up with an answer that might try and support your case. In your case, your numbers do not add up. They are inaccurate and they are not accepted by anybody else in the country.

**Mr Phillips:** I think the unemployed in the province of Ontario understand that Ontario has lost 37,000 jobs in the past five months. They understand that you said unemployment would drop, and they see from your own statistics 27,000 more people out of work in 1996 than the previous year. They understand that when you ran for Premier, you promised there would be 725,000 jobs. Now what we see is — you promised that by now we'd have

228,000 jobs — 97,000 jobs created. They understand very well that you are letting them down dramatically.

My question again is this, and let's have an answer from you: Why is it that the facts you present, the 37,000 fewer jobs in the last five months — no one disputes those numbers. No one. Everyone in the province understands that is the truth. Those are your numbers, 37,000 fewer jobs. We, and more importantly the unemployed of this province, want to know why. Tell us why Ontario lost 37,000 jobs in the last five months. Let's have the answer.

**Hon Mr Harris:** Since the statistics are totally inaccurate and irrelevant, I'll ignore those and go on and tell you what is really happening. Quite frankly —

**Mr Phillips:** Prove one that's inaccurate.

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Member for Scarborough-Agincourt, please come to order.

**Mr Phillips:** Give me one that is inaccurate, Premier. Prove one.

**The Speaker:** Member for Scarborough-Agincourt, come to order, please.

**Hon Mr Harris:** All the statistics in fact point to Ontario doing a better job than the rest of Canada in job creation, in new confidence, in home starts, in construction, in retail sales, in all of those areas. All the indicators, all the projections, contrary to the honourable member, who used to have credibility but has completely lost it in the past year with the publishing of erroneous numbers, contrary to that, say absolutely the opposite.

**Mr Phillips:** Prove one. I challenge you. I don't believe a word of it.

**The Speaker:** Member for Scarborough-Agincourt, I'm warning you to come to order, and this is the final warning. You've got to come to order.

**Hon Mr Harris:** So what we are finding, while all of us are concerned — I want to tell you, on this side of the House, we find it unacceptable if even one person who wishes to work is unemployed, so our goal is to create a climate, to create policies, to counter 10 years of disastrous policies, to ensure that everybody who wants a job can get one. I'd love to be able to tell you that's the case today; it is not. Obviously we have a lot more work to do, but we are getting there.

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker:** Order. The member for Oriole, come to order. There are no more warnings.

### CHARITABLE GAMING

**Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine):** My question is to the Premier. Last week your government released an announcement about charity gaming clubs, a number of permanent charity casino sites in the province. Attached to that was a schedule that had designated regions. Included within that is a reference to my community of Beaches in Toronto.

During two-plus years of debate around the future of the Greenwood Race Track site, let me tell you that it didn't matter what side you were on, whether you were for development on the site or whether you were for all park on the site, people were united in their opposition to having any kind of casino activity, gaming activity in that



community. Hundreds of people from right across the Beach were involved.

I'm not going to have an opportunity to get a supplementary in today, Premier. What I really want to ask of you is an assurance about the process. I want you to give me an assurance that if the residents of Beaches-Woodbine are opposed to having one of these charitable gaming clubs in our community, it won't be forced on us. Please assure us of that and tell us what the process will be.

**Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier):** I think you are aware that we're trying to take some 2,400 three-day permits down to 44 across the province so that we can have better control, so that we can replace the three-day roving Monte Carlo events, which are costly to run, difficult to administer and take a lot of dollars in administration and do not get enough dollars to the charity. Let me assure the member that the city of Toronto will definitely, after any changes we make, not have more casino permits than it has had to date.

WATER AND SEWAGE SERVICES  
IMPROVEMENT ACT, 1997  
LOI DE 1997 SUR L'AMÉLIORATION  
DES SERVICES D'EAU ET D'ÉGOUT

Deferred vote on the motion for second reading of Bill 107, An Act to enact the Municipal Water and Sewage Transfer Act, 1997 and to amend other acts with respect to water and sewage / *Projet de loi 107, Loi visant à édicter la Loi de 1997 sur le transfert des installations d'eau et d'égout aux municipalités et modifiant d'autres lois en ce qui a trait à l'eau et aux eaux d'égout.*

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** We have a deferred vote on second reading of Bill 107.

It will be a five-minute bell; call in the members.

*The division bells rang from 1512 to 1517.*

**The Speaker:** Order. All those in favour, please stand one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

**Ayes**

Arnott, Ted	Hastings, John	Runciman, Robert W.
Baird, John R.	Hudak, Tim	Sampson, Rob
Barrett, Toby	Jackson, Cameron	Saunderson, William
Bassett, Isabel	Johns, Helen	Shea, Derwyn
Beaubien, Marcel	Johnson, David	Sheehan, Frank
Boushy, Dave	Kells, Morley	Skarica, Toni
Brown, Jim	Klees, Frank	Smith, Bruce
Carroll, Jack	Leach, Al	Snobelen, John
Chudleigh, Ted	Martiniuk, Gerry	Spina, Joseph
Cunningham, Dianne	Maves, Bart	Sterling, Norman W.
Danford, Harry	McLean, Allan K.	Stewart, R. Gary
DeFaria, Carl	Munro, Julia	Tascona, Joseph N.
Doyle, Ed	Murdoch, Bill	Turnbull, David
Ecker, Janet	Mushinski, Marilyn	Vankoughnet, Bill
Flaherty, Jim	Newman, Dan	Villeneuve, Noble
Ford, Douglas B.	O'Toole, John	Wettlaufer, Wayne
Froese, Tom	Ouellette, Jerry J.	Wilson, Jim
Galt, Doug	Palladini, Al	Witmer, Elizabeth
Guzzo, Garry J.	Parker, John L.	Wood, Bob
Harnick, Charles	Rollins, E.J. Douglas	Young, Terence H.
Harris, Michael D.	Ross, Lillian	

**The Speaker:** All those opposed, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

**Nays**

Bartolucci, Rick	Crozier, Bruce	North, Peter
Boyd, Marion	Duncan, Dwight	Phillips, Gerry
Bradley, James J.	Kennedy, Gerard	Pouliot, Gilles
Brown, Michael A.	Kormos, Peter	Pupatello, Sandra
Caplan, Elinor	Kwinter, Monte	Ramsay, David
Castrilli, Annamarie	Lankin, Frances	Ruprecht, Tony
Christopherson, David	Marchese, Rosario	Sergio, Mario
Churley, Marilyn	Martel, Shelley	Silipo, Tony
Cleary, John C.	Martin, Tony	Wildman, Bud
Colle, Mike	McLeod, Lyn	Wood, Len
Cordiano, Joseph	Morin, Gilles E.	

**Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers):** The ayes are 62; the nays are 32.

**The Speaker:** I declare the motion passed. Shall the bill be ordered for third reading?

**Hon David Johnson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Government House Leader):** I ask that the bill be referred to the standing committee on resources development.

**The Speaker:** So ordered.

## PETITIONS

### FIRE SAFETY

**Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury):** This is a petition in response to Bill 84.

"Speed, experience and teamwork save lives. Don't get burned by Bill 84."

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Firefighters need speed, expertise and teamwork to save lives. I oppose any legislation that could undermine the work of my local firefighters and jeopardize fire safety in my community. Please listen to professional firefighters and amend Bill 84 to eliminate the threat to fire safety."

Of course I affix my signature to the petition.

**Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine):** I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Firefighters need speed, experience and teamwork to save lives. I oppose any legislation that could undermine the work of my local firefighters and jeopardize fire safety in my community. Please listen to professional firefighters and amend Bill 84 to eliminate the threat to fire safety."

I agree completely and I've affixed my signature.

## MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

**Mr John L. Parker (York East):** I continue to receive this petition from residents throughout the borough of East York. This one reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the borough of East York is requiring voters in the current mail-in referendum to return their ballots in envelopes bearing their names and addresses; and



"Whereas the ballots are to be forwarded to the borough of East York at the East York Civic Centre and not to an independent elections commission; and

"Whereas the East York council has declared itself in favour of a particular result in the referendum; and

"Whereas the question itself is prejudicial in its wording and clearly slanted towards the result favoured by council; and

"Whereas all of the above factors violate well-established and universally acknowledged principles of a free democratic referendum process;

"Therefore, be it resolved that we, the undersigned, petition the Ontario Legislature to:

"(1) Speak out against the current flawed, undemocratic referendum in East York;

"(2) Disregard the results of the vote; and

"(3) Proceed with the government's program to provide for Toronto's future through the creation of one Toronto for all of us."

#### FIRE SAFETY

**Mrs Elinor Caplan (Oriole):** I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Firefighters need speed, experience and teamwork to save lives. I oppose any legislation that could undermine the work of my local firefighters and jeopardize fire safety in my community. Please listen to professional firefighters and amend Bill 84 to eliminate the threat to fire safety."

I support this petition and I sign my name to it.

**Mr Gilles Pouliot (Lake Nipigon):** Addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Firefighters need speed, experience and teamwork to save lives. I oppose any legislation that could undermine the work of my local firefighters and jeopardize fire safety in my community. Please listen to professional firefighters and amend Bill 84 to eliminate the threat to fire safety."

I have affixed my support and my signature to this petition.

#### ABORTION

**Mr Derwyn Shea (High Park-Swansea):** I have the great pleasure to rise on behalf of a number of constituents from High Park-Swansea and Parkdale to present a petition to the Legislature Ontario which reads, in part:

"Whereas the right to life, a right guaranteed in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, is limited to only those who are born, by the practice of abortion, without prescription by law, contrary to the guarantee of the charter;

"Whereas the case law to date supports an unlimited right to life for unborn children" — and a number of case studies are submitted for information —

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature Ontario to honour the guarantee of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms in regard to an unlimited right to life for those unborn and to call on the government of Ontario to cause the practice of and the public funding of abortion to cease in Ontario until such time as a law

prescribes the appropriate limit to the charter-guaranteed right to life."

I submit this on behalf of my constituents.

#### FIRE SAFETY

**Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin):** To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Firefighters need speed, experience and teamwork to save lives. I oppose any legislation that could undermine the work of my local firefighters and jeopardize fire safety in my community. Please listen to professional firefighters and amend Bill 84 to eliminate the threat to fire safety."

I affix my signature to this petition.

**Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold):** I've got a petition that's headlined: "Speed, experience and teamwork save lives. Don't get burned by Bill 84." It's addressed, of course, to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It reads:

"Firefighters need speed, experience and teamwork to save lives. We oppose any legislation that could undermine the work of our local firefighters and jeopardize fire safety in our communities. Please listen" — clearly, the Premier hasn't — "to professional firefighters," like those in the gallery today and thousands of others across this province, "and amend Bill 84 to eliminate the threat to fire safety."

I've added my signature to indicate my strong support for those sentiments.

**Mr Tony Ruprecht (Parkdale):** I have a petition here against Bill 84, which would be detrimental to the excellent work that our firefighters are doing. It reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Firefighters need speed, experience and teamwork to save lives. I oppose any legislation that could undermine the work of my local firefighters and jeopardize fire safety in my community. Please listen to professional firefighters and amend Bill 84 to eliminate the threat to fire safety."

As usual, I'm affixing my signature to this petition because I'm in full agreement with it.

**Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre):** I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly on behalf of the firefighters in Hamilton. I want to say to the members that the people I represent in Hamilton Centre are very supportive of this petition.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Firefighters need speed, experience and teamwork to save lives. I oppose any legislation that could undermine the work of my local firefighters and jeopardize fire safety in my community. Please listen to professional firefighters and amend Bill 84 to eliminate the threat to fire safety."

I proudly add my name to theirs on behalf of my constituents.

**Mr Monte Kwinter (Wilson Heights):** "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Firefighters need speed, experience and teamwork to save lives. I oppose any legislation that could undermine the work of my local firefighters and jeopardize fire safety in my community. Please listen to professional



firefighters and amend Bill 84 to eliminate the threat to fire safety."

I've affixed my signature to it.

1530

**Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie):** I have a petition here as well from the constituents of my community of Sault Ste Marie and it's about the very same issue, this whole question of Bill 84 and firefighters, and it reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Firefighters need speed, experience and teamwork to save lives. I oppose any legislation that could undermine the work of my local firefighters and jeopardize fire safety in my community. Please listen to professional firefighters and amend Bill 84 to eliminate the threat to fire safety."

This is signed by a whole whack of people from across this province, a lot of people, and I will sign it as well.

**Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener):** I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Firefighters need speed, experience and teamwork to save lives. I oppose any legislation that could undermine the work of my local firefighters and jeopardize fire safety in my community. Please listen to professional firefighters and amend Bill 84 to eliminate the threat to fire safety."

**Mr Peter North (Elgin):** I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Firefighters need speed, experience and teamwork to save lives. I oppose any legislation that could undermine the work of my local firefighters and jeopardize fire safety in my community. Please listen to professional firefighters and amend Bill 84 to eliminate the threat to fire safety."

I've affixed my signature as well.

**Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex South):** I have a petition from Toronto, Kingston, Orillia and Hamilton to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Firefighters need speed, experience and teamwork to save lives. I oppose any legislation that could undermine the work of my local firefighters and jeopardize fire safety in my community. Please listen to professional firefighters and amend Bill 84 to eliminate the threat to fire safety."

I affix my signature in support of this.

**Mr Rosario Marchese (Fort York):** I've got a petition here signed by approximately 100 people, and this petition is entitled "Speed, experience and teamwork save lives: Don't get burned by Bill 84." It's addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Firefighters need speed, experience and teamwork to save lives. I oppose any legislation that could undermine the work of my local firefighters and jeopardize fire safety in my community. Please listen to professional firefighters and amend Bill 84 to eliminate the threat to fire safety."

I sign my name to this petition.

**Mr E.J. Douglas Rollins (Quinte):** I've got a petition here signed by 560 names from the Quinte area.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Firefighters need speed, experience and teamwork to save lives. I oppose any legislation that would undermine the work of my local firefighters and jeopardize fire

safety in my community. Please listen to professional firefighters and amend Bill 84 to eliminate the threat to fire safety."

**Mr David Ramsay (Timiskaming):** "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Firefighters need speed, experience and teamwork to save lives. I oppose any legislation that could undermine the work of my local firefighters and jeopardize fire safety in my community. Please listen to professional firefighters and amend Bill 84 to eliminate the threat to fire safety."

I've affixed my signature to this petition.

**Mr Len Wood (Cochrane North):** I have a petition here to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Speed, experience and teamwork save lives: Don't get burned by Bill 84:

Firefighters need speed, experience and teamwork to save lives. I oppose any legislation that could undermine the work of my local firefighters and jeopardize fire safety in my community. Please listen to professional firefighters and amend Bill 84 to eliminate the threat to fire safety."

It is signed by hundreds of people throughout Ontario, and I affix my name to the petition as well.

**Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor-Sandwich):** In addition to bringing the calendar to the minister today, the firefighter calendar from Windsor, I am bringing a petition as well:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Firefighters need speed, experience and teamwork to save lives. I oppose any legislation that could undermine the work of my local firefighters and jeopardize fire safety in my community. Please listen to professional firefighters and amend Bill 84 to eliminate the threat to fire safety."

I affix my signature.

**Ms Shelley Martel (Sudbury East):** I have a petition which is addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It reads as follows:

"Firefighters need speed, experience and teamwork to save lives. I oppose any legislation that could undermine the work of my local firefighters and jeopardize fire safety in my community. Please listen to professional firefighters and amend Bill 84 to eliminate the threat to fire safety."

This is signed by 45 residents of the city of Toronto. I have affixed my signature to it and I agree with the petitioners.

**Mr Mario Sergio (Yorkview):** On behalf of firefighters everywhere, this is addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Firefighters need speed, experience and teamwork to save lives. I oppose any legislation that could undermine the work of my local firefighters and jeopardize fire safety in my community. Please listen to professional firefighters and amend Bill 84 to eliminate the threat to fire safety."

I concur and I will affix my signature to it.

## WORKERS' COMPENSATION

**Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre):** I have a petition that reads as follows:



"Whereas the government of Ontario has plans to make changes to the Workers' Compensation Act which will have a negative impact on workers, including firefighters; and

"Whereas the changes include reducing the payouts to 85% of earnings, eliminating various types of injuries and having employees apply to their employers for benefits; and

"Whereas the WCB had a surplus of \$510 million in 1995; and

"Whereas in 1994 there was an uncollected employer debt of \$173 million; and

"Whereas the problems with the WCB are not the fault of injured workers;

"Whereas the recommendation to privatize will result in an increase of 13% in administrative costs;

"Therefore be it resolved that the government of Ontario stop its plan to privatize the WCB and that extensive province-wide hearings be held before any changes are made to WCB."

I add my signature.

## INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

### WHEEL SAFETY ACT, 1997

#### LOI DE 1997 SUR LA SÉCURITÉ DES ROUES

Mr Palladini moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 125, An Act to improve road safety by making wheel detachments an offence by amending the Highway Traffic Act / Projet de loi 125, Loi visant à améliorer la sécurité routière en faisant du détachement de roue une infraction au Code de la route.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley):** Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

**Hon Al Palladini (Minister of Transportation):** I addressed the contents of the bill in my statement earlier today. However, I wish to appeal to my opposition colleagues to approve this bill without any further debate. The sooner we get it done, the safer Ontarians are going to feel on our highways.

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

### FIRE PROTECTION AND PREVENTION ACT, 1996

#### LOI DE 1996 SUR LA PRÉVENTION ET LA PROTECTION CONTRE L'INCENDIE

Resuming the adjourned debate on the motion for second reading of Bill 84, An Act to promote Fire Prevention and Public Safety in Ontario and to amend and repeal certain other Acts relating to Fire Services / Projet de loi 84, Loi visant à promouvoir la prévention des incendies et la sécurité publique en Ontario et modifiant ou abrogeant certaines autres lois relatives aux services de lutte contre les incendies.

**Hon David Johnson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Government House Leader):** I believe we have unanimous consent to have a five-minute bell on that order.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley):** Is it agreed that we'll have a five-minute bell? Agreed.

Mr Runciman has moved second reading of Bill 84. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

Call in the members; a five-minute bell.

*The division bells rang from 1540 to 1545.*

**The Acting Speaker:** Members take their seats, please. Mr Runciman has moved second reading of Bill 84. All those in favour of the motion, please rise one at a time.

### Ayes

Arnott, Ted	Harris, Michael D.	Rollins, E.J. Douglas
Baird, John R.	Hastings, John	Ross, Lillian
Barrett, Toby	Hudak, Tim	Runciman, Robert W.
Bassett, Isabel	Jackson, Cameron	Sampson, Rob
Beaubien, Marcel	Johns, Helen	Saunderson, William
Boushy, Dave	Johnson, Bert	Shea, Derwyn
Brown, Jim	Johnson, David	Sheehan, Frank
Carroll, Jack	Kells, Morley	Smith, Bruce
Chudleigh, Ted	Klees, Frank	Snobelen, John
Danford, Harry	Leach, Al	Spina, Joseph
DeFaria, Carl	Martiniuk, Gerry	Sterling, Norman W.
Doyle, Ed	Maves, Bart	Stewart, R. Gary
Flaherty, Jim	McLean, Allan K.	Tascona, Joseph N.
Ford, Douglas B.	Munro, Julia	Tumbull, David
Froese, Tom	Murdoch, Bill	Villeneuve, Noble
Galt, Doug	Mushinski, Marilyn	Wettlaufer, Wayne
Gilchrist, Steve	Newman, Dan	Wilson, Jim
Grimmett, Bill	O'Toole, John	Witmer, Elizabeth
Guzzo, Garry J.	Ouellette, Jerry J.	Wood, Bob
Harnick, Charles	Parker, John L.	Young, Terence H.

**The Acting Speaker:** All those opposed, please rise one at a time.

### Nays

Bartolucci, Rick	Duncan, Dwight	North, Peter
Boyd, Marion	Kennedy, Gerard	Phillips, Gerry
Bradley, James J.	Kormos, Peter	Pouliot, Gilles
Brown, Michael A.	Kwinter, Monte	Pupatello, Sandra
Caplan, Elinor	Lankin, Frances	Ramsay, David
Christopherson, David	Marchese, Rosario	Sergio, Mario
Cleary, John C.	Martel, Shelley	Silipo, Tony
Colle, Mike	Martin, Tony	Wildman, Bud
Cordiano, Joseph	McLeod, Lyn	Wood, Len
Crozier, Bruce	Morin, Gilles E.	

**Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers):** The ayes are 60; the nays are 29.

**The Acting Speaker:** I declare the motion carried. Shall the bill be ordered for third reading?

**Hon David Johnson:** Madam Speaker, I refer the bill to the standing committee on administration of justice for public hearings.

**The Acting Speaker:** To the justice committee, so ordered.



## POLICE SERVICES AMENDMENT ACT, 1997

LOI DE 1997 MODIFIANT LA LOI  
SUR LES SERVICES POLICIERS

Resuming the adjourned debate on the motion for second reading of Bill 105, An Act to renew the partnership between the province, municipalities and the police and to enhance community safety / Projet de loi 105, Loi visant à renouveler le partenariat entre la province, les municipalités et la police et visant à accroître la sécurité de la collectivité.

**Hon David Johnson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Government House Leader):** Madam Speaker, with regard to the 19th order, I believe we have unanimous consent for a five-minute bell.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley):** Is that agreed? Agreed.

Further debate?

Mr Runciman has moved second reading of Bill 105. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion, please say "aye."

Those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members; a five-minute bell.

*The division bells rang from 1551 to 1556.*

**The Acting Speaker:** Will members take their seats, please.

Mr Runciman has moved second reading of Bill 105. All those in favour of the motion will please rise one at a time.

## Ayes

Arnott, Ted	Hastings, John	Runciman, Robert W.
Baird, John R.	Hudak, Tim	Sampson, Rob
Barrett, Toby	Jackson, Cameron	Saunderson, William
Bassett, Isabel	Johns, Helen	Shea, Derwyn
Beaubien, Marcel	Johnson, Bert	Sheehan, Frank
Boushy, Dave	Johnson, David	Skarica, Toni
Brown, Jim	Kells, Morley	Smith, Bruce
Carroll, Jack	Klees, Frank	Snobelen, John
Chudleigh, Ted	Leach, Al	Spina, Joseph
Cunningham, Dianne	Martiniuk, Gerry	Sterling, Norman W.
Danford, Harry	Maves, Bart	Stewart, R. Gary
DeFaria, Carl	McLean, Allan K.	Tascona, Joseph N.
Doyle, Ed	Munro, Julia	Turnbull, David
Flaherty, Jim	Murdoch, Bill	Vankoughnet, Bill
Ford, Douglas B.	Mushinski, Marilyn	Villeneuve, Noble
Froese, Tom	Newman, Dan	Wettlaufer, Wayne
Galt, Doug	O'Toole, John	Wilson, Jim
Gilchrist, Steve	Ouellette, Jerry J.	Witmer, Elizabeth
Grimmett, Bill	Palladini, Al	Wood, Bob
Guzzo, Garry J.	Parker, John L.	Young, Terence H.
Hamick, Charles	Rollins, E.J. Douglas	
Harris, Michael D.	Ross, Lillian	

**The Acting Speaker:** Those opposed, please stand one at a time.

## Nays

Boyd, Marion	Duncan, Dwight	North, Peter
Bradley, James J.	Kennedy, Gerard	Phillips, Gerry
Brown, Michael A.	Kormos, Peter	Pouliot, Gilles

Caplan, Elinor	Kwinter, Monte	Pupatello, Sandra
Castrilli, Annamarie	Lankin, Frances	Ramsay, David
Christopherson, David	Marchese, Rosario	Sergio, Mario
Cleary, John C.	Martel, Shelley	Silipo, Tony
Colle, Mike	Martin, Tony	Wildman, Bud
Cordiano, Joseph	McLeod, Lyn	Wood, Len
Crozier, Bruce	Morin, Gilles E.	

**Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers):** The ayes are 64; the nays are 29.

**The Acting Speaker:** I declare the motion carried. Shall the bill be ordered for third reading?

**Hon David Johnson:** Madam Speaker, if the bill could be referred to the standing committee on administration of justice, again for public hearings.

**The Acting Speaker:** So ordered.

## HOUSE SITTINGS

**Hon David Johnson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Government House Leader):** Madam Speaker, I believe we have unanimous consent to debate the government House calendar motion.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley):** Is there consent? Agreed.

**Hon David Johnson:** I move that notwithstanding any standing order, when the House adjourns on Thursday, March 6, 1997, it stand adjourned until Tuesday, April 1, 1997, and that the House meet on Friday, April 4, 1997, at 1:30 pm until 6 pm, at which time the Speaker shall adjourn the House without motion until Monday, April 21, 1997.

I know that people are going to be leaving at this time but I will try to speak just for a very few moments.

**The Acting Speaker:** Could I ask members to either take their seats or if they're going to have meetings, go outside, please.

**Hon David Johnson:** I won't speak for long on this because I know there are a number of members on all sides of the House who wish to participate. I will simply say that through this calendar motion we will guide the activities of the House over roughly the next two-month period of time. The most significant aspect of that guidance will be that there will be a considerable amount of time allocated for public hearings on quite a number of bills. Of course we are aware that public hearings are already taking place on the new City of Toronto Act even as we speak and that shortly public hearings will be involved with Bill 104, which is the bill dealing with school boards in the province.

I think most people are somewhat familiar with those two pieces of legislation, but there are a number of other pieces of legislation as well. While I think it's very apparent that there is a difference of opinion in this House — the opposition parties have a difference of opinion certainly, and they've expressed that difference of opinion very vocally with regard to the legislation that this government has introduced — I believe that all parties are unanimous in wishing to see active and thorough public hearings on all these matters and to let the general public come forward, have an opportunity to see the bill, state their views, state their opinions on the



various pieces of legislation, the various bills the government is proposing.

With this motion that I am placing before the House today there will be a period of some four weeks of time — two in the latter part of March and two towards the middle of April — which will be highly utilized for public hearings. People from all around Ontario will have the opportunity to speak to the government legislation, that legislation, I might say, some of which we just dealt with here earlier this afternoon.

Bill 84, for example, will improve public safety and streamline services and reduce costs in fire protection and prevention. The bill will ensure the effective delivery of fire protection services by municipalities with the assistance of the province of Ontario. It's noteworthy that the public fire safety council will be strengthened to play a greater role in fire protection and also in public education, and of course the legislation will streamline various pieces of legislation which affect fire protection in Ontario, consolidating some nine separate statutes that we have at present, thereby cutting the red tape which has hampered delivery of fire services. We will have seven full days of public hearings on that bill.

Bill 98 is the Development Charges Act, and this is an interesting act that some municipalities have used in terms of dealing with new housing coming into those municipalities, whereby along with the approval for the housing, there is a price attached — in some municipalities it's as high as over \$20,000 for each house — and that money goes into various pots to provide services, to provide roads to those new homes, sidewalks, sewers, libraries, in some cases schools. In some cases the money has gone to hospitals; in some cases the money has gone to city hall, to either make improvements or build civic centres, recreation complexes etc.

All of these are certainly worthwhile endeavours, but the question has been, is the amount of money that has been raised in accordance with the services that the people who are buying the house require or, indeed, has more money been raised than necessary, thereby raising the price of a house, of each individual unit, and taking that unit out of the affordability range for many, many people? You can well appreciate, if you add \$20,000 to \$25,000 on to the price of a home, many people simply can't afford to buy that home. This bill, as the member for St Catharines notes, is one that attempts to deal in a fair and even manner with allowing municipalities to raise development charge funds but at the same time ensuring that not too much is raised, so that the price of a house remains affordable for many people.

One of the other bills deals with the Police Services Act. We dealt with that earlier this afternoon in terms of second reading. This bill will attempt to bring fairness to the way the people of Ontario pay for their policing. In some municipalities, such as here in Metropolitan Toronto, for example, the cost of policing falls on the property tax, and that's how people pay for the policing. In other municipalities, some 576 to be exact, no money is raised through the property tax, and in effect the moneys for those municipalities come through the provincial government, through income taxes of course, and retail sales taxes and other avenues that the province has.

The question is, is that fair? Should some people be paying for their policing services from their property tax at the same time that they pay all the other provincial taxes, while other people only pay for the policing through the province of Ontario but don't pay anything at all through property tax?

**Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines):** Nobody should pay.

**Hon David Johnson:** The member opposite says nobody should pay. I'm all for that, of course, but you may find that the police expect to be paid.

This bill will ensure fairness and that the municipal councils will provide for policing services, pay for policing services, to ensure that local accountability back within all municipalities, and at the same time the municipalities will be able to appoint a majority of the members of the police services board so that they will be able to deal with the budget items.

1610

Another bill involves property assessment in Ontario. This bill is scheduled for two weeks of public hearings, and I'm sure that during those two weeks the committee will travel to many places across the province of Ontario to hear people speak.

One of the problems we face in Ontario is that many assessments are out of date and that the assessments are done on a different basis. Here in Metropolitan Toronto, for example, the current assessment base dates back to information from the 1940s and the current assessment system was actually implemented in the early 1950s and remains substantially unchanged from that period of time. You will find that similar properties have different taxes. People say: "Is that fair? Should the owners of two homes, two properties that are essentially exactly the same, worth the same amount of money, pay a difference in their property taxes?" Most people would say, "No, that's not fair," so the assessment bill, Bill 106, will establish a fair and uniform property assessment system across the province based on a current value, with regular updates.

While there will be changes to the assessments of existing properties, this bill will allow for phasing in. This bill will allow for protection of senior citizens, for example, who may not, in the cases where there is an increase, be able to pay that increase. At the same time, there will be many people who have been paying too much in property tax over the years. This new assessment system will result in many people in Ontario paying a lower amount.

**Hon Marilyn Mushinski (Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation):** The people in Scarborough have been paying too much.

**Hon David Johnson:** As my colleague points out, the people in Scarborough are an example of that.

Indeed, it is the objective of this government through these changes — this property assessment change, the restructuring of services — to reduce the property tax in the province. We think the people of Ontario are paying too high property taxes today, and not only the people of the province of Ontario but the businesses in the province of Ontario are paying too high taxes. As a result of the fact that those taxes are too high, businesses are not



investing to the same degree, we're not attracting the kind of investment into Ontario that we should and the jobs aren't being created to the extent that they should be. We're attempting to address that. At the end of the day, I'm confident property taxes as a whole will be less, more fair and uniform.

I'll just say a few words about Bill 107, another one of the bills. It has to do with water and sewage treatment in Ontario. At the present time the province operates and owns some 25% of the sewage and water treatment plants in Ontario; municipalities own the other 75%. Through this bill we will be transferring the remaining 25% to the municipalities and assisting them in terms of setting up those operations. Five full days of public hearings will be held on that particular bill.

Bill 108 is to streamline the Provincial Offences Act. This will consolidate the administration of provincial offences at the municipal level, at the local level, so that cities and towns will be taking over the administration of provincial offences, ensuring the kind of service they need within their communities. At the same time I might add that through this bill, because they will be taking over those responsibilities, they will be deriving revenue. The municipalities will be deriving considerable revenue as a result of this bill. I know many municipalities have long sought for this authority to control ticketing offences, parking offences and that sort of thing within their municipalities and at the same time getting the revenue from them to assist them in their budgeting.

Bill 109 involves the public library system. This bill will give the municipalities full authority over the provision, the management of library services.

**Mr John R. Baird (Nepean):** Hear, hear. A good piece of legislation.

**Hon David Johnson:** My colleague from Nepean is most supportive of that. The transfer of responsibilities will eliminate the duplication of municipal and provincial services, reduce costs while ensuring there remains free access to libraries, and at the same time free use of materials in libraries, free borrowing of printed materials etc.

**Mr E.J. Douglas Rollins (Quinte):** Relatively cheap.

**Hon Ms Mushinski:** More effective, more efficient.

*Interjections.*

**Hon David Johnson:** I guess everything really isn't free. I think my colleagues will realize —

**Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre):** You get heckled by your own.

**Hon David Johnson:** Yes, I'm getting heckled from behind here. What can I say?

By "free," of course I know we consider that people coming in to get a book or a piece of educational material are accustomed to having that essentially free, but we know there is a price to be paid for this and that municipalities, through their property taxes, will know what is the best service for their municipalities and will tailor it to their financial needs and to the needs of their community. That bill will receive some four full days of public hearings during those break periods.

What we have are a number of pieces of legislation of interest to many people in Ontario, a number of pieces of

legislation which will increase the accountability of the services which are provided, which will make it clear which level of government will provide those services, which level of government will pay for those services, as opposed to the present structure where you have two levels of government, in some cases maybe even three levels of government, providing the service or paying for the service, and if the taxpayer is not happy with it, who does the taxpayer complain to, which level of government?

Now, through these bills, it will be abundantly clear which level of government is responsible and which level of government is going to tax and fund it. If the taxpayer doesn't like the service, wants a better service, feels the service is too costly, the taxpayer, the people of Ontario will know where to go. At the end of the day, I'm confident these bills will result in better government, in better services to the people tailored to their needs and their communities, and in a truly accountable system at a lower cost, more efficient, to the people of Ontario.

With those few remarks, I will sit down. I know there are many other members of this House who wish to speak to this matter.

*Applause.*

**Mr Bradley:** I'm waiting for the applause from the government benches to die down in my rising to speak this afternoon in the assembly on a number of issues related to this resolution. I know it's far-ranging and that what we want to talk about is not only what's on the agenda but what should be on the agenda and what has been on the agenda and should be undone. I think all members will be interested in that. I will try, in my brief period of time this afternoon, my brief 90 minutes, to talk about a number of these issues.

We have to put everything in the context of why this government is moving in the direction it is. First of all, it has the fallacy out there that somehow it's keeping its promises. There were firefighters in the public gallery this afternoon who knew this government wasn't keeping yet another promise. That promise was that they would not proceed with any substantial changes to the fire safety act without first consulting with those on the front line of firefighting, the professional firefighters, who are here today. Indeed, they were deeply disappointed because no doubt among the ranks were many people who voted for the Harris Conservatives last time. They will be wary next time, having seen the results of placing their faith and their support on the backs of this government, certainly being supportive of the government in many ways because, largely, the Premier assured them that he would not break a promise and he promised that he would meaningfully consult them.

What we have instead is a management-driven bill this afternoon, one designed to put firefighters in their place, because that's what this government really wants to do, but the consequences for the public at large are going to be rather significant. That's what firefighters are pointing out, that it's not simply the firefighters themselves who are affected by this legislation, but also many others. In the public hearings that the opposition has won for the firefighters, we will hear this in many communities.



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The government, it should be known, initially was very reluctant to have hearings of any meaningful nature. They wanted to keep them relatively brief, they wanted to keep most of them at Queen's Park, at the Parliament Buildings, and they also wanted to throw them together with the Police Act and have hearings so that we would have a mixed-up set of hearings.

Those of us in the opposition — and as House leader, I can speak for the Liberal caucus — insisted that there should be meaningful public hearings, that the committee should travel to a variety of communities, that we should be going for a couple of weeks in this regard and that the government should not be moving hastily with Bill 84. As a result of the steadfast position of the opposition, the government House leader and government whip finally capitulated to the representations made by the opposition and by representatives of the firefighters. Now, as a result of that exercise — I can assure you it was like pulling teeth — we have something at least close to a meaningful consultation taking place very late on.

I don't want to raise the expectations of firefighters or others in this province that this government is somehow going to make substantial changes to its legislation. Its record is clear: It doesn't do that. It simply goes out and carries on a façade of a consultation and comes back and does exactly what it wants to. It sometimes tinkers with the bill. But where there is life, there is hope, and therefore we believe we should go through the consultation process in the hope that somehow the government will for once change its mind when faced with the reality of the excellent arguments that will be made by people in opposition to this bill.

But I was saying in the context of everything going on that there were negotiations taking place, because the public should know that there is a process whereby the House leaders of the three parties, Dave Johnson for the Conservatives, Bud Wildman for the NDP and myself for the Liberals, sit down with the whips, who are three other people, in these meetings and try to iron out a schedule for the legislation coming forward.

I want to assure the member, first of all — I interrupt myself — that I will be talking about VLTs and the concentration of power in Hollinger corporation later on in my speech. I know the member for Nepean was hoping that would be the case.

But I wanted to look at the meetings that were going on. At no time did the government ever mention road safety legislation, flying wheel legislation. But the Minister of Transportation, whose flack — that's not a bad word to be used, by the way; a flack is a media representative — always has him out for these photo opportunities, even if they have to tie up traffic she has him out for the photo opportunities, wanted to have yet another photo opportunity, another media presence, and so there was a big announcement with a lot of fanfare, after so much pressure from the opposition and others, that the government was finally going to do something in terms of a bill to deal with flying wheels and flying tires and other items that fly off some of the trucks in this province.

I should mention I heard that the media adviser to the minister has done such a good job they're going to parachute her into the Premier's office now, where she can do an equally good job of trying to put across the government point of view.

Let me say, Mr Speaker, and I know you'd be interested in this, that at none of the meetings of the House leaders was there any mention at all of the road safety situation. The government had this other agenda. It was busy downloading on municipalities, dumping all of these responsibilities and financial obligations on municipalities, and didn't have any time for road safety. Then right out of the blue, so to speak, comes this legislation today. The hints were dropped last week so that the appropriate people in the news media would be able to give them advance publicity. But there was the minister, large as life in the House today, wanting to put forward a piece of legislation and, I suppose, wanting to get it considered quickly.

I wrote a letter to the minister of Management Board, who is also the government House leader, Dave Johnson, and said: "We're quite happy to see this. You've never mentioned this, ever. This has never been part of your legislative plan. You've obviously capitulated to Dwight Duncan, the member for Windsor-Walkerville, who has put so much pressure on, on a weekly basis, over the issue of road safety and particularly truck safety. You've finally capitulated to that. You're finally taking some action, and we're happy to accommodate this."

The government likes to paint the opposition as being obstructionist. I said today and Dwight Duncan said today in the hallway in here: "Let's get this bill before the House. Let's have the debate on this bill. Put aside some of the other pieces of legislation. Put aside the piece of legislation that puts more money in the pockets of developers so that they will be thankful to this government and show up at the government fund-raisers." The friends of the government could wait. They could wait another few weeks and have their legislation dealt with. Put aside the libraries act, where the government is now relinquishing its responsibility financially for libraries in this province and leaving libraries to the wolves, in effect, because the poor municipalities have got so many other responsibilities they're not going to have much money left for libraries in this province.

We have said, and I say it again today, and the member for Windsor-Walkerville, who is so responsible for the action that was finally taken by the government a year and a half later, because it wasn't anywhere to be found for a year and a half on the issue of truck safety, he has said, "Let's proceed with that bill this week."

I'm happy to debate this bill this week. The member for Wellington is anxious, I'm sure, to have this legislation passed and would be prepared to acquiesce on some of the other legislation the government has that is so unpopular with the municipalities in our province. I'm saying let's proceed with it. I want to be accommodating. I want to be a positive force in this Legislature, therefore I'm saying: "Put that bill on the table. We'll debate it."

We'll get at least second reading done, because the government may want that to go to — I'm not going to be unrealistic with the government and say that you don't



want any input. The government may want second reading before the school winter break. If they want that, we'll be happy to accommodate them. Very quickly they could have second reading. It could go out to committee. Members could hear from representatives of the police and representatives of the public and safety associations and the trucking companies about the advisability of proceeding with the specific provisions of this legislation. They may look at how they can toughen it even more.

They may look at how it can be realistically put into effect, because we know that no matter what the government does, it doesn't have the staff to carry out the enforcement and never have had, in all of the ministries. They bark a loud bark, and then they take away the dogs. There's nobody there to enforce left in any of the ministries. You can build up as many straw men as you want, and you can bring in as tough legislation as you want, but you've got to have the people to enforce it.

The member for London North, who's here this afternoon, knows that. She's nodding in fact. She's either nodding off or she's nodding in agreement. She's nodding in agreement, I think, that you've got to have that. She knows because she's one of the few — I won't say red Tories — moderate Tories in the government caucus.

1630

In fact, I'm going to get into another subject where I'm going to describe a presentation which she made in my constituency, compare it with the real boss, the Premier himself, and contrast that and say how I like the approach of the member for London Centre and dislike very much the Premier's approach. I don't say that simply to divide and conquer, although that's always a subtext, to divide and conquer. I was speaking to a group the other night and using exactly this example, and I'll get into that. She will remind me if I forget to get into that particular item.

On road safety, I'm going to tell you, this government has been dragging its wheels for a long time. There have been people who have been killed on the roads, injuries have taken place and there have been major accidents. Every time you're driving by a truck now, you're wondering if something's going to come flying off the truck and somebody's going to be injured.

I think there's a consensus. The NDP is not opposed to it; they're for strong action. The Liberals are for strong action. The Conservatives have now been converted to strong action. Therefore, I see no reason why you can't bring that bill in and forget some of these other bills that are so divisive in this House and so divisive in this community.

Another bill I welcome that they could have put on the record was the bill to stop predatory pricing practices by the major oil companies. My friend the member for Quinte had a resolution in the House last Thursday where he wanted to tell the federal government that it should deal with this problem, and I agreed. I said, "Let's support this resolution." Our members said yes. Nobody said no to that. But I also said on the same day: "There's something the provincial government can do. They don't simply have to raise their hands to point their fingers somewhere else. They can pass a bill" — and in that case, I said we'd do the three readings in one day — "to stop predatory pricing practices."

I can't think of a member in this House who knows more about it than my friend the member for Quinte, who has educated me a good deal on this issue, I must say; has been most helpful. I'm saying now, I'm going to help him out to get the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations or energy or whoever is responsible — I said the Minister of Economic Development, who I asked the question to the other day, who seemed to think the prices were all right despite the fact that the member for Quinte had raised the issue in the morning. I felt bad about that; not too bad, but I felt bad about that in one way for both the minister and the member.

I'm prepared to see a bill come forward, and if you want it on the calendar to bring that bill forward, to prohibit the major oil companies from selling their gas to their own stations, say, at 50 cents a litre and to the independents at, say, 50 cents a litre, and then allowing their own stations to sell under that. There's a temporary benefit to the consumer as the big oil companies and their own stations sell for less money, but in the long term it is not good because it knocks the independents out of business, and if it weren't for the independents, the major oil companies would be gouging us even more than they do at the present time.

I know my friend from Quinte would support such a bill. He's probably behind the closed doors of the caucus urging the minister to do so. I don't expect him to rise in the House to say so, that's not the way the system works, but I know in my heart of hearts that he simply wouldn't point his finger at some other level of government when he knows his own level can take appropriate action immediately. So I wouldn't mind seeing that on the list.

I want to get into education, because the member for London North is here and she and I have served together in this House for some period of time. She came in on a by-election, I think, in about 1988, and she had some experience in the field of education. In fact, I had anticipated that if Mike Harris, the Premier, were a progressive Premier and a wise Premier, he would have selected Dianne Cunningham, the member for London North, as Minister of Education, or the present Minister of Labour, Elizabeth Witmer, the member for Waterloo North. Both of them have a moderate view of education. They both worked hard on a document that I think was called blueprint for education. They went out and conducted some hearings. They listened to some people around the province about some of the concerns about education, and no, I didn't agree with everything in the document, but at least they made that effort. At least they weren't out to bash education. Instead we get a Minister of Education whose job obviously is to step on the people in education and put them in their place.

I was saying in the House the other day that's quite an effective strategy, if you're proud of that kind of strategy. I met a person the other day who doesn't like this government. I thought he was kind of an NDPer all my life; I always thought he was, certainly not favourable to many of the policies of this government. He said to me, "I'll tell you one thing, that Mike Harris is putting those teachers in their place."

Of course that's electorally successful, but it's part of the strategy of this government to divide the province, to



divide and conquer, and that's not what the job of a government is. The job of a government is to bring consensus to a province. It's hard to reach sometimes, but it's not to step on one person to please another person. At a time when economic challenges are out there, when job opportunities aren't as many as people would like them to be, there becomes a hardening of attitudes. It's easy to pander, as this government did in the last election campaign, to the resentment of people, because there's always somebody else you can step on, always somebody else who should be cut.

It must be interesting to listen to some of them today who come to the government members. I want to tell the government members that I am not sympathetic to some of these people. They've come to me and said, "You know I lost my job, the government cut, and you know, I agreed with the cuts but I don't think they should cut where I am." I said: "I'm sorry, that's what I heard in the last campaign. They were about cutting, so you can't tell me on the one hand you want cuts but not in the other area."

**Mr Baird:** But they're doing what they said they were going to do, what they promised.

**Mr Bradley:** I'm glad the member for Nepean intervenes because there's this myth that somehow this government has kept its promises. It's kept some of them, it hasn't kept others, but they put this myth out there that some people in the news media buy. The overwhelming number of members of the media, who are very perceptive, of course know this is mythology because they remember when the Premier of Ontario, interviewed by Robert Fisher during the leaders' debate in May 1995, said, "Certainly, I can guarantee you I have no plans to close hospitals." The people in Ottawa must say today, "I wonder about that." The people in Sarnia and the Lambton area are worried now; the Niagara Peninsula, Port Colborne, Fort Erie, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Grimsby, St Catharines are all worried.

I said, "Well, don't worry." I tell them all the time I wish they wouldn't worry. I said, "I have the Premier's word, I have it in writing." I well remember the Premier saying that he can guarantee us he has no plans to close hospitals, and so I think people should rest assured their hospitals are safe, or should they?

Anyway, I got away from the issue of education. What the government is doing in education is dividing and conquering. They have two different views. I remember in St Catharines, before the election — maybe 1994 but I'm going to guess 1995 — the member for London North, and I think we should use her name sometimes, Dianne Cunningham — who was the Conservative critic in education, came to speak in St Catharines to the Ontario Public School Teachers' Federation, Lincoln district. I even had the pleasure of introducing her that evening and did so, I must say, with many compliments, and they were sincere compliments because I thought she had done a lot of work in education. She was knowledgeable in the field and is a person who, while I didn't agree with everything she had to say, was honestly interested in the education community and not in bashing them.

The unfortunate thing for educators is that on the same day Mike Harris, the now Premier of Ontario, then leader

of the Conservative Party, was speaking to the Rotary Club in St Catharines — different audience, different reception. He was busy bashing educators. He was busy talking about they all make too much money and their jobs are too easy and there's too much money in education, while at the other end of the city at Club Heidelberg the member for London North was giving, I thought, a very moderate speech. She wasn't giving away the ship. Don't worry, she wasn't varying from what you might expect a Conservative, a Progressive Conservative, to be saying. She wasn't varying from that, but there was the Premier giving the real message in the other part of town.

I say to the members of the teaching profession who voted for you people over there: "Well, you know what you got now. You got the Mike Harris version, not the Dianne Cunningham version. I tell you, given the choice, I'll take the Dianne Cunningham version of education any day of the week."

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But what you're doing in education is you're dividing: dividing and conquering. You are, first of all, building on the resentment that some people have of educators and of the whole field of education, people who have developed a resentment over the years, and they like it when somebody else is kicked around or somebody else is put in their place.

Unfortunately, you're dealing with a group that is very besieged these days. It's not as easy to teach today as it was 20 years ago or when people in this Legislature were in school. It's a much more difficult challenge today. There are far more children in the school system from dysfunctional families.

I can recall, if you want to look at numbers, that when I first started teaching, there were some classes with 38 or 39 or 40 people in them. But in those classes were very few children who had special challenges that they face today. They came from homes which were the "normal nuclear family" that you used to see on Father Knows Best or Leave it to Beaver, that kind of family. Today there are a lot more challenges out there, far more children who come from a different kind of household where they need more support services, where the challenges are much more difficult.

The support for the teaching profession from the parent group was often far greater in years gone by. There are still many strong supporters out there, but it was a general consensus that there should be support. Today instead they're being challenged on many occasions. While we know everybody is for strong discipline, they're for strong discipline for everybody else's kid and not their own. That's the difference they confront today. They're out there trying to run a hard school system in a soft society in many ways, a society which won't always respond.

I feel for those people on the front line. They must be depressed day after day being assaulted by the Minister of Education verbally and by members of this government on so many occasions, even getting the government non-cabinet members up to ask the lob-ball questions so that they can bash teachers. Some of them, by the way, who should know better than to do that, do that.



In terms of the way they divide and conquer, they do this: They have the people who believe in junior kindergarten fighting with the people who believe in adult education. They have secondary people fighting with elementary people. They have post-secondary people fighting with one another — in other words, community colleges and universities — and both of them fighting with the secondary school system. They have trustees fighting with teachers. They have Catholic board members fighting with public board members. It's a difficult situation. Then the resentment builds and the difficulty builds up.

There was a game that everybody probably played when they were a child called pin the tail on the donkey. In this case the tail should be pinned on the donkey that's in Toronto and not on local boards of education. What they work well as is a team.

There were some trustees in an audience I spoke to the other night, and I can tell you that some of them are Conservatives. It wasn't a Liberal crowd particularly; it was a non-partisan crowd, or a multipartisan crowd. I looked at some of those people and said, you know, I've listened to them insulted. I've listened to the Minister of Education and the Premier talk down to trustees. Yes, there may be some who deserve criticism from time to time, just as members of this House from time to time deserve criticism, but by and large, the people of all political backgrounds, or of no political affiliation, who have served on boards of education have tried to do the very best job possible. They've run for the board. They've been interested; they've been keen. They've gone on the committees. They've visited the schools. They've talked to administration. They've worked with the parents. They've talked to the children within the school system and the older people within the school system.

When I hear them insulted as money-grabbing, useless people out there, the "Too Many Politicians Act" or the "Too Many Board Members Act," as you always talk about, I'll tell you, it sickens me to see that happen to people who have dedicated so much of their time to education because they felt it's a good investment in our future. When I see teachers who on a daily basis are working with children with great difficulties, with limited resources today and with the knowledge that the government looks down upon these teachers, I feel bad for those individuals. I think there are some in the government caucus who probably know members of the teaching profession who are working hard at providing a good service for people.

Of course there's the mythology that somehow administration dominates. If it did at one time, it sure doesn't today. Remember that when the NDP was in power and facing a very difficult recession, they had to take measures which were not popular with many in the education community. They had to invoke the social contract, which meant diminishing the size of the pay-cheques of many people, which meant restricting some of the expenditures, not because they wanted to, not because they were doing so in a pleasurable way, the way this government does today, but because they were in a very deep recession.

Today we see that a lot of that had already taken place, that a lot of the trimming had already taken place within education. Now we're getting to larger class sizes, now we're getting to fewer resources, and remember today there are more children in the system who have special needs than existed before. Before they were shunted away in a school by themselves or kept at home or something, but they often didn't get a chance to be in a school. I see they are there today and that's a very special challenge.

I should say I saw a nice gesture by a politician in this regard. I was at a school in my community the other day and the Speaker of the House of Commons, Gilbert Parent, as he would be known in parts of Welland, was speaking, and one of the students who was there had a very special problem, and that was communication. The student would make certain noises during the speech. The audience was a bit restive about this. There were a few — I must emphasize very few — people who might have been laughing or something. He took advantage of the opportunity to say: "You know, he does not mean to be doing this. This is not his fault. He is one of us. He is now included in the school system and that is a virtue."

That is what happens today. We include people with special needs, with special handicaps or disabilities within our school system, and that means it takes more people to look after them. It takes perhaps one-on-one assistance to look after these people so they can be part of our society, not shunted away somewhere but part of our society. That's what happens when you start cutting education.

A lot of the cutting has already been done. I think you have to remember that. We are here to protect people who are the most vulnerable. I'm not putting them down, but rich people and privileged people, wherever they be, in whatever society, are able to look after themselves because they have money and they have influence and they have the wherewithal to survive. People who do not, people who require our assistance, people who require our intervention are the people who are most vulnerable in our society, for whatever reason, the people at the lowest end of the economic scale, very often, and those who do not have the abilities that others have in our society. I hope we never forget that, and I know that many in the Davis administration, a previous Conservative administration, did not forget that and that's why they brought in Bill 82 at that time. It was Dr Bette Stephenson who brought in Bill 82, which dealt with special education. I want to commend her, as I have on many occasions, although in the House she would have wondered why I was not more vociferous in my support for her when she was Minister of Education.

Here we have this situation going on today where the government is going to step on people in education. It's a good investment in the future. It doesn't mean that you accept any expenditure. Every board, every commission, every level of government has to look at its expenditures and its mode of operation to see that they are as efficient as possible. Most people out there say when you talk to them, "I don't so much mind that you have my tax dollars; I mind when you have my tax dollars and don't spend them wisely." It's incumbent upon all of us at any level of government to ensure that those tax dollars are



spent wisely. But when you take away so much from the system and you do it with a smile on your face, knowing that somehow a lot of the population is going to agree because somebody else is going to be the victim, then I think you do no service to our society.

Another group of people out there — and this involves one of the bills that is contained in this motion, Bill 104, which deals with education. If I went down my street and knocked on the doors and said to people, "Do you think if you had fewer boards it would save you money?" at first glance most people would probably say yes, and that's what this government is a past master at: simplistic, simple solutions that sound plausible. Sometimes I want to say they are plausible and there are circumstances where those actions should be taken. The previous Minister of Education, Dave Cooke, who is now on the — what's that commission called?

1650

**Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South):** The Education Improvement Commission.

**Mr Bradley:** Dave Cooke, who is now one of the co-chairs of that, was a proponent of fewer school boards.

**Mr Bisson:** Jim, it's called "eek."

**Mr Bradley:** I refer to as "eek."

But it wasn't a holus-bolus approach, I would have hoped, because there are some boards that may have felt that when they got together they were better off combined. But you don't save the money. For whatever you save, if it's a few dollars, you lose that local autonomy.

As I mentioned in a previous speech in this House, one of the things that used to pinpoint where the Conservative Party stood was a belief in local autonomy and local accountability. They believed in that. They believed that the closer you were to the people, the better it was. That was a Conservative philosophy in years gone by, certainly of many of the Conservatives I've seen. This government moves in exactly the opposite direction. They think bigger is better all the time.

I think that's unfortunate, because in the Niagara Peninsula, for instance, if you have nine trustees for the whole Niagara Peninsula public school board, you can be assured that parents and others interested in education will not have the same access to those members of the board of education. It simply will not be the same access. You're taking away the local input, the local accountability, putting it in a larger level, and of course the province anyway is going to be making most of those decisions.

There's another provision in that bill that I know the Speaker would be interested in, and that is the provision which kicks in the shins, or worse, the people who are non-teachers in the system. There are thousands upon thousands of employees of boards of education — secretaries, maintenance workers, those who are involved in custodial care of the buildings — who are going to have their jobs taken away because you're going to privatize. That's your real agenda, to privatize that area. What does that mean? That means bringing in some group of people at \$7.80 an hour, minimum wage, with virtually no benefits, to do the work.

The people who are there now are not highly paid people. They are people who have some benefits, they are

people who have something significantly better than the minimum wage and they're contributors to the community. They're part of the educational team. What will happen, of course, is that they'll be looking for support from the others within the system. I hope they will get it. I hope the others will not cut them loose simply so that they themselves can continue to be paid appropriately and have the appropriate benefits. That's part of this. They're all afraid of this.

I've talked to them and these are not particularly politically active people. They haven't been out knocking on the doors, for the most part. I don't know whether the Minister of Education or the Premier get a big thrill out of bullying those kinds of people around and saying: "We'll fix you. We'll put you down to minimum wage. We'll take away your benefits." Where are people going to work? What are people going to survive on? A lot of these people are single-support people in those positions. When I see that on the docket of bills that this government's going to deal with, I say it's simply not fair to be doing that, yet that's a significant part of that bill.

I hope the people who have been involved in education recognize what has happened. My good friend Roger Allen, who is a former director of education, a strong supporter of the Conservative Party, I know must be simply in a total dither over this, although I can never recall Roger being in a dither over anything. He must be beside himself at what is happening with this government, because he helped to elect them, because he had some faith in previous Conservative governments. He knew Bob Welch — he was a Minister of Education — Tom Wells, Larry Grossman.

**Mr Bisson:** Alan Pope.

**Mr Bradley:** Alan Pope, was he Minister of Education? No. Dennis Timbrell. All moderate members of the Conservative Party; all pro-education.

**Mrs Boyd:** There were some women, you know. Bette Stephenson.

**Mr Bradley:** Bette was a little to the right of them. I already paid tribute to Bette Stephenson because she was the one who brought forward Bill 82 on special education, and I want to give her credit. Bette was a little to the right of the others, but I'll tell you, she was still to the left of this group. Mind you, that's not hard, not difficult. But I felt she had a genuine concern about education and the people in it as well. I simply don't see that today, and that's most unfortunate. The only hope is that some of the government non-cabinet members, who don't have to adhere to the solidarity of the cabinet, will speak out on these matters.

Then I look at the other context in which we find all these bills, and that's the tax cut. The people who initially thought a tax cut of 30% in the provincial income tax was a good idea are not all committed to this today. They now recognize that the greatest beneficiaries of this are the wealthiest people in our society, the people who will get tens of thousands of dollars back as a result.

**Mr Rollins:** Bank presidents.

**Mr Bradley:** The bank presidents were one example, simply because they happen to be highly paid people, among other people who are highly paid. But I don't



want to isolate one specific group except to say the most wealthy people in our society do the best with the tax cut.

People are now coming to me and saying, "You know, I initially thought a tax cut was a good idea, but now when I drive out on the highways when the roads are full of snow or slush or ice and I can't find a snowplow or a sander or a salting truck anywhere, I really wonder whether I need that tax cut or whether I'd rather have that service." When they see their hospitals being closed, they say, "You know, given the choice, I would rather maintain our hospitals in our community than have that 30% provincial income tax cut," or in education, "I'd rather see a strong education system; I'd rather not see our students gouged at the post-secondary level for their tuition fees these days" so that soon only the wealthy are going to be able to go to university or to community college because they're the only ones who can afford it.

Remember, there used to be jobs in the summer for students. There used to be a lot of jobs in the summer. General Motors, in our area, and the paper companies in other areas and Inco and companies like that used to hire students in the summer, so they could make a pretty good wage in the summer, and it would help them to get back to school. Those jobs are gone. That doesn't happen very much any more. Since students can't get decently paying jobs in the summer, for the most part, they are forced now to borrow more and more money.

I think what you're going to see is a back-to-the-1950s situation, where the wealthiest kids and the smartest kids got to go to school and the others didn't. People who are very high achievers can get scholarships. We're talking about people who are not necessarily the most gifted but are keen, bright people and they don't have the money. How awful that would be to lose that particular resource. That's where we as government, as legislators, come into making a difference for those students, for building for the future in a very competitive world where we will need well-educated students.

So we're going to have the tax cut. It's going to cost, when it comes fully into effect, almost \$5 billion a year in lost revenue. Dominion Bond Rating Service, which is certainly not a socialist organization by any means, could be considered to be quite conservative, has pointed this out, that the lost revenue will be close to \$5 billion a year. That means this government is borrowing money to give you and me a tax cut.

Now, I thought the deficit was a problem. I said, "The deficit is a problem; it has to be addressed." The NDP was starting to address it; the Liberal Party and the Conservative Party were both in favour of addressing the problem of the deficit. So you would say, "Why would you accumulate any more debt than necessary?" Well, you're going to do it because you're borrowing money to give a tax cut and therefore, as a result, you pay interest; therefore you add to the debt. It makes no sense to me.

I've talked to a few what I would call professional economists, people who are PhDs in economics, who say that there is a contractionary effect when you cut expenditures and cut taxes at the same time; it's not an expansionary effect, it's a contractionary effect. These are Conservatives such as Dr Joseph Kushner of Brock University who, on St Catharines city council for some

20 years, has been one of the most small-c conservative people when it comes to government expenditures you'll find. He moved a motion at city council asking this government not to proceed with the tax cut because he felt it would be detrimental to our province.

**1700**

There are other areas the government is moving into that I think should be addressed. First of all, I should say in passing that my colleague the member for Scarborough-Agincourt, the Liberal finance critic, Gerry Phillips, developed the figures very well showing that the government is nowhere near achieving its job goals. The jobs you are seeing are largely minimum wage, no benefits and part-time. He has produced the government's own figures to show that they are not producing the jobs, that Ontario is now a drag on the national economy.

*Interjection.*

**Mr Bradley:** We all know what they've told to say. The Premier and his advisers have said, "What you should do is discredit anybody who disagrees with us." So when Martin Mittelstaedt, the Globe and Mail reporter, published an article quoting an assistant deputy minister as in effect confirming that the government was in some financial trouble, the Premier said out there: "Oh well, he's always wrong. You can't trust him. He's always wrong."

**Mr Bisson:** Martin?

**Mr Bradley:** That's one of their enemies. Now he says Gerry Phillips is wrong. Then he'll say the NDP is wrong. Everybody's wrong but Mike Harris. That's what it's going to be. Of course, there are some who will applaud that or not challenge him on that, but I think there are many people in the province who are going to do so.

I thought the government would have been bringing forward as part of this resolution a bill to rescind allowing VLTs, video lottery terminals, into every bar and every restaurant on every street in every neighbourhood in every community in Ontario.

**Mr Bisson:** Did you read the Globe today?

**Mr Bradley:** The Globe and Mail today has an article, the Star on the weekend, the American papers are full of it. Governments all over are finding out what a pile of quicksand they're getting into with gambling, particularly VLTs.

The Premier, when I asked him the question, said: "Oh well, you know, don't worry about us. We aren't going to put them in bars and restaurants. We are going to do something else. We're only going to put them in permanent casinos." But then we find out there are more permanent casinos than anybody could have believed.

**Mr Bisson:** How many?

**Mr Bradley:** I think 38 was the figure.

They went to Kitchener-Waterloo, announced one in Kitchener-Waterloo and the people there said, "We don't want anything to do with that." People down in the Beaches area in Toronto said, "We don't want it." Mel Lastman said: "No, it just brings misery. We don't want it here." But of course we know why the government is doing it.

**Mr Bisson:** How many referendums?



**Mr Bradley:** The government said it would have a referendum for them and of course there are no referenda at all being held on these. But I thought today's St Catharines Standard had a good editorial on this. It reads as follows:

"Charity Begins at Queen's Park.

"Bluffing is part of a game of cards, and it's clear that the dealer is bluffing with the Mike Harris government's announcement of 44 permanent charity casinos to be set up across the province." So there are 44.

"As far as the government is concerned, charity obviously begins at home. The chief beneficiary of the new gaming establishments — one of which will be located in Fort Erie — will be the provincial treasury.

"Recognized charities will indeed derive some benefit, but gamblers who believe their games of chance will be of great benefit to social agencies and others are being fooled.

"The charities' cut will be a mere \$180 million a year of the anticipated \$1.2-billion take — while the province will rake in the lion's share.

"The charities, in fact, are being used as a mere front for the government's lust for more gambling dollars, its craving unassuaged by the bounty it is already reaping from full-scale, 'big-league' casinos in Niagara Falls, Orillia and Windsor.

"How else to explain the government's haste to expand the range of gambling opportunities across Ontario? Many of the communities which have been chosen as sites for the new wave of casinos did not invite them.

"In fact, some are downright mad that they have been chosen, particularly since Premier Harris is on record promising there would be no proliferation of casinos beyond the original one in Windsor without a province-wide referendum.

"No such referendum was ever held, of course, and some municipalities now plan to use their own bylaws and power to fight the gambling expansion, feeling that the Conservatives will crumble in the face of strong opposition.

"Through sheer necessity, charitable organizations will lend their names to these 24-hour-a-day gambling operations, accept their 10% cut, and, we suppose, be grateful.

"However, for the government to describe these establishments as 'charity casinos,' when they are nothing more than another tool to wring more revenue out of taxpayers for the Ontario treasury, is sheer hypocrisy."

I'm not saying this; it's a St Catharines Standard editorial saying it.

Right across the province you're seeing this. I noticed in the Western Report — am I correct that this is a right-wing organization? I'll ask Frank Sheehan. He's in the House and he would know. The Western Report, is that not a right-wing organization?

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin):** Order. Please speak to the Chair.

**Mr Bradley:** Through the Speaker, I would ask if the member for Lincoln is aware. He would know of right-wing publications. My friend certainly could never be accused of being a socialist or a pinko in any of his incarnations at all. I was just wondering if he would nod acquiescently if he knew it were.

**Mr Frank Sheehan (Lincoln):** If you say it is, it is.

**Mr Bradley:** He's accepting my word, Mr Speaker, and I'm happy to hear that.

It says this: "Anti-VLT Agitation Starts to Spread. Calls arise for a provincial vote as two more towns push for a ban." Again, this is the Western Report. This is something like the Fraser Institute, I suppose. It says:

"The latest municipality to take action against VLTs is Fort Chippewyan, an isolated town of 1,200 residents 140 miles north of Fort McMurray. 'We know there have been thefts directly related to gambling,' says local RCMP sergeant Tim Gilbert. He explains that in an isolated community where milk is \$4.80 and bread is \$4, there is very little disposable income, and if someone has a gambling addiction there will obviously be domestic problems.

"Fort Chippewyan youth have been suffering the brunt of the harm, some think. 'Increasing numbers of kids are not going to school, or are going to school hungry,' says Trish Mercredi, a nurse with the Nuneen Health Authority. 'We have an evening youth curfew here,' explains Sgt Gilbert. 'It's not uncommon to return a youth and find the parents aren't home because they're out gambling.' The impact of four VLTs in Fort Chippewyan has been extraordinary, he says and he hopes at the very least the town gets no more."

This goes on right out in Alberta. Alberta, although it's being rivalled by Ontario now, is considered to be the capital of gambling in Canada. What we're seeing is governments that don't want to tax the wealthiest people in our society; instead, they want to tax the most vulnerable, because it's the most vulnerable, the addicted people, often the poorest people financially in our society who are going out to these gambling establishments to try to get rich. They're people who don't have, necessarily, the educational opportunities others have, for a variety of circumstances, or they don't have the connections. They're not like some of the YPCs who can go out and get jobs because they know rich and influential people in society. They're not like that. These are people who don't have those connections, and therefore they head out and get into gambling problems.

We've got a casino in Windsor, one in Orillia and one in Niagara Falls. I'm not fighting old battles at all and I will get to Conrad Black later, but I'm not fighting those battles. I'm saying at least keep the VLTs, the video slot machines, within the confines of the three casinos that we have — and they say they want to put them in the racetracks as well — in other words, in a controlled venue. I don't think they should be in these new casinos that you're setting out. Worst of all, the government's real goal is to get them into the bars and restaurants, because that's where the real rake is. As I've said many times, they'll be in every bar, every restaurant, on every street, in every neighbourhood, in every community in Ontario, and the main beneficiary will be the man who didn't like these, the Premier.

I used to applaud him. The Premier, when he was in opposition, would get up in the House and denounce the NDP for casinos, let alone video lottery terminals. He would get up and I would say, "Well done, Mike Harris. Well done, leader of the Conservative Party," and my



good friend Ernie Eves, who sat on this side of the House, now the Treasurer of this province, the Minister of Finance, made some compelling, arresting speeches in this House against government involvement in gambling. Today they are the ones — what do you call those people? The croupiers?

1710

**Mr Baird:** I don't know. I don't know the lingo as well as you.

**Mr Bradley:** Is that the word you use? They are the croupiers who are now bringing in the dough.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Member for Nepean, please refrain from —

**Mr Bradley:** The member for Nepean is interested in this, I know, and he's been hoping I would deal with this subject. But all over, you're getting calls for restricting gambling, and what is this government doing? They're increasing the gambling opportunities, and they're going to pay an awful social price.

I'm waiting for the churches to get hold of this. I know out west they've gotten hold of it. I've heard from some of the churches that are saying, "We didn't know this was happening," and "We thought the Harris government, of all governments, particularly with some of the members who ran for them, who were very, shall we say, pro-family in their presentations during the election campaign — we can't believe they would be in favour of this." I know when the vote was taken on this bill, a number of people had the VLT flu and flew the coop in this House and didn't vote for it, but that's another matter.

I want to say I also expected a bill on this agenda rescinding the government's moves in closing hospitals. I would have thought that would be part of the agenda that we would be dealing with, because in the Niagara region, as they did in Ottawa today and as they did in Thunder Bay and Sudbury, the Sarnia area, other areas, they're now closing hospitals left and right. It's rather interesting. You can't have it both ways. I was talking to a person the other night who said, "You know, some of the Conservative members down at the south end of the peninsula are for saving the hospitals," and I'm saying, "It can't be," because I don't agree with them. But I will admire the person who says: "I'm for the Common Sense Revolution. The Common Sense Revolution calls for the closing of hospitals, and I support that." If a person does that, I'll disagree, but at least the person is being honest; at least the person isn't playing two sides. Yet I see evidence today — there was a member in the House the other day who got up. I remember my friend the member for Niagara South, who wore the sweater, put the sweater on at the meeting and got up and said, "I'm fighting for the Port Colborne hospital. I defend the Fort Erie hospital," and then —

*Interjection.*

**Mr Bradley:** He finally got forced into asking a question after the question on dice, "Shall we have dice in the casino, and how is the wine this year?" Finally the opposition would say, "When are you going to ask a question on this in the House?"

You can't have it both ways. You can't say, "I'm for the Common Sense Revolution," and then turn around

and say, "but I want to save the hospital," because the Common Sense Revolution dictates that there shall be hospitals closed. If my friend from Nepean, if my friends from Ottawa are there to say, "Look, we're closing four hospitals, and I agree with it," if they say that, at least they're sticking to one side of the issue and they're being consistent, but you can't have both. You can't say: "Oh, they're closing the St Marys hospital. I'll fight for that, but I believe in the Mike Harris Common Sense Revolution." It can't be done.

*Interjections.*

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order, member for Nepean and the member for Cochrane South.

**Mr Bradley:** If they are prepared to say, "I will not vote for this. I will leave the government caucus. I'll sit as an independent," that's a different story. But you can't have it both ways. You can't be for \$44 million coming out of the expenditures for hospitals in the Niagara region and then turn around and say, "Oh, but I want to save my local hospital." You can't have both. You'd have to vote against the budget to do that, and nobody I notice here was going to vote against the budget.

So what you are doing, despite what Premier Harris said — and I remember the quote well. I think it was May 15, 1995. The election is on, they're having the leaders' debate and Robert Fisher of Global TV, who was one of the panelists, asked the Premier if his program of cuts meant that they were going to be closing hospitals.

**Mr Bisson:** What did he say?

**Mr Bradley:** The member for Cochrane South asked what he said, and let me tell you what he said exactly, "Certainly I can guarantee you it's not my plan to close hospitals."

**Mr Bisson:** "Guarantee"?

**Mr Bradley:** "Guarantee," and he said he had no intention of closing hospitals.

I know a lot of people in the Niagara Peninsula who said, "I like some of the things Mike Harris is saying." The opposition was saying: "Watch out. You can't trust the Tories" — or the Reform Party, as I say of this group — "when it comes to health care." "But you know, Mike Harris gave his word right on television before an audience. It'll be written down somewhere. When he said he wasn't closing hospitals, I believe him." Now they're recommending the closing of hospitals.

**Mr Bisson:** Is that another broken promise, Jim?

**Mr Bradley:** Another broken promise.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Member for Cochrane South, you're playing with fire.

**Mr Bradley:** What we have is a situation where they intimidate the local people. Did you ever notice that the people from hospital boards and the people from the administration of hospitals and the friends of hospitals, before these reports were being developed, were relatively quiet? They put forward their case but they were quiet. That was an eerie silence, because I can remember that when the Liberal government was in power, if they didn't get an 8% increase in their budget, the health care system would collapse tomorrow.

Yet some of these people were silent because they were so afraid. They knew the bully bill, Bill 26, which gave the government the right to set up a commission,



which simply of its own volition took the Minister of Health off the hook and said, "We'll close the hospitals." They wanted to dodge the bullet, so they would be quiet. Instead of being critical and joining together to fight, everybody ran for cover until such time as the report came out.

In our area the local commission, under the chairmanship of Rob Welch, was dealt a card that said: "You've got \$44 million less in hospital funding. We're cutting that from hospital funding." What did you expect they were going to come out with? Did you expect they were going to call for more hospitals, more services? Of course not. But the focus of attention is on the commission. They aim at the commission.

I'm saying to people, this is not a report called *Made in Niagara* — that's what you may try to entitle it — it's made in Toronto, it's made in Mike Harris's office. That's where it's made. Don't start blaming the local committee; blame the Harris government. Tell them you want to hold the Premier to his promise when he said, "Certainly I can guarantee you I have no plans to close hospitals." That was Premier Harris who said that.

I have indicated my strong support for all of these hospitals: Niagara-on-the-Lake; Port Colborne; Fort Erie; Grimsby, where the West Lincoln Memorial is located; and the Hotel Dieu Hospital in St Catharines.

There are some people who would say: "You should consult with the other people. Why don't you ask the people from the General Hospital or Niagara Falls or Welland? Why don't you ask those people about hospital closings. Do they agree with the report?"

Does anyone in their right mind expect any of those people to say it's a bad report? They dodged the bullet. They may even be getting more money. They don't wish others ill but they're not going to say that. Our mayor in our community got up one day and said, "I am going to back the Hotel Dieu," and he was criticized by some in the local media who said, "Why don't you ask the other people, the other hospitals?"

1720

You know, Mr Speaker, in your riding of Carleton East — the Speaker who is now sitting in the chair is from Carleton-East — that the people in the hospitals that dodged the bullet in your area are not going to be overly critical of the report because they dodged the bullet, but the people who are associated with the hospitals that were closed by this government are certainly going to be vociferous, and I think that's to be expected.

So I call upon this government to abandon its nonsensical closing of hospitals. What we need is not a \$44-million cut, but a \$25-million increase in health care spending in the Niagara region just to bring us up to something close to the provincial average.

There were some excellent presentations at the meeting in St Catharines, and I was pleased to be one of the presenters. I know Dr Ron Casselman, who is a urologist at the Hotel Dieu Hospital, gave some good advice — I will find his reference in just a few minutes, I am sure — on this because he suggested the government shouldn't move so quickly in the closing of hospitals. He quoted a well-known authority in that regard. I know there are other authorities. One of the things that the

author of *Boom, Bust and Echo* says is — and that's a best seller — "Don't move quickly to close hospitals when you may need them." We have an aging population, particularly in the Niagara Peninsula we have an aging population, and we believe we're going to need that kind of hospital care for many years to come.

Dr Casselman had an excellent quote and I want to give him full credit for sharing it with the people who were present on that occasion. The author was an eminent person in the field of health care and that person cautioned that we shouldn't move forward quickly to close hospitals as others have. I can't find the particular quote right now among all the things I have on my desk here, but I remember it was a particularly good quote and I want to give Dr Casselman credit for bringing it forward for those who were in the audience.

I caution this government in that regard. What most people will say is that you're moving too quickly, too drastically, and not taking into account the consequences of your action. That's why I'm particularly concerned about what you're doing today.

Health care is one field where even the government of Alberta, which is popular in many other areas, has found some considerable opposition and I can certainly understand why that would be the case.

Some other issues contained within the legislation the government is bringing forward and are ominous for local municipalities relate to the downloading. Even those who are well-known supporters of Premier Mike Harris must be beside themselves today as they sit on municipal councils watching what is happening to them.

Now the Premier says — I'm reading the *Standard*, Wednesday, January 22 — "Harris Chides Municipal Whiners." He called them "whiners" because they happened to be critical of what he was doing. You see, they took the education cost off the property tax and there was a round of applause for that, but in the subsequent days they downloaded or dumped on to the municipalities responsibilities in areas that are either unpredictable in terms of their cost, or are predictable and are going to go up.

Education, because of the levels of enrolment we have, was unlikely to increase significantly in the next number of years. However, areas such as seniors' health care are bound to go up. Already our regional homes in Niagara, operated by the regional municipality of Niagara, have been compelled to cut staff and to cut hours and to cut services to the people. They're still doing a good job. They're working hard at it. They've got people who are adequately compensated in many areas, certainly better than other areas, and they're good-quality staff who want to work with the seniors who are in there.

Unfortunately, if they are privatized across the province — in other words, because they're downloaded — the larger municipalities, in our case the region, may consider privatization. That means, I think, a lower level of service in those homes. Remember, the very existence of those homes and the quality and standard of service would mean that others in the private sector would have to keep their standards up as well. So I caution the government, I urge the government not to do that, and I was at a press conference where we called for that.



We also have ambulance services that have been downloaded to municipalities. In our area a large American company called Metro/Rural Corp has entered the business, has bought into the business. There may be a lot of things that our American friends do well. I know on the government benches, the Conservative benches, there's a great admiration for the Republican Party, the state of New Jersey and much of the privatization that's taking place, the Republican initiatives that are making the rich richer and the poor poorer and are privatizing anything that moves.

What is happening is that there's a fear out there that there's a different approach coming into Canada on health care. If there's one thing that differentiates Canadians from Americans, by and large, it's our attitude towards health care. In the United States the quality of one's health care is dependent upon the size of one's bank account or the amount of money someone has in his or her wallet. That is not the case in Canada. In Canada we all are guaranteed, certainly in Ontario we have been over the years, to have good health care, regardless of what our financial means might be. There are some areas where more privileged people do have a little more of an advantage, but by and large we can say that the amount of money you have in your wallet does not dictate the quality of care that you get in this province.

That's not the attitude in the US. It's an attitude of profit first and health care second. I'm not saying that always produces bad health care; I'm saying it's a motive that is different from ours. Ours is providing service to the patient; ours is providing good community health care. The American system is different. I don't want to see it imported into Canada, as it is being done.

I see in hospitals now — when you talk to people who are in hospitals, they will say that you had better bring a family friend or a member of the family with you because there aren't the nurses to look after you. The nurses want to, but there aren't as many, so the quality of care available as a result is declining rather significantly because of that lack of staff.

I remember reading an administrator saying, and they have to say this, "We're going to have 220 or 225 fewer people, but we're going to do a better job." That's nonsense. You can't do a better job with fewer people in that regard, because health care is labour-intensive, it is people-intensive. The more nurses you take away, the more assistants, the more orderlies, the more people in charge of preparation of food or cleaning or any of the other jobs in the hospital you take away, the more health care declines — and all to feed an ill-advised tax cut that the member for Wellington advised against, that the Speaker of the House, Chris Stockwell, advised against, that the member for Etobicoke-Lakeshore, Morley Kells, advised against, and the member for Grey-Owen Sound. It was unwise, yet they're proceeding with it and it's costing us in terms of the quality of health care we have in this province.

I was on the downloading to municipalities. They also are going to have more and more responsibility for roads, even provincial roads coming through their communities. They're going to get responsibility for welfare, for mothers' allowance, and these are costs which are either

unpredictable or are going to rise in the areas they're getting — so much downloading they have been up in arms.

1730

As I say, even people who normally apologize for Mike Harris and the Conservative government today are rising up, and municipal councils and boards of education across Ontario, to say: "Hold it, Mike. We're not whiners. We're going to stand up for our communities and we think what you're doing is wrong. We think all of this downloading will result in a significant deterioration of service or a substantial increase in property taxes."

But the smart people in the Premier's office will say: "This is great. We'll get the credit for the income tax cut, and the municipalities will get the blame for tax increases because we've downloaded on to them responsibilities they never had in years gone by."

Government advertising has become something of an issue with this government. I thought it particularly interesting today, and other days, that there is a Premier who is closing hospitals, who is causing a higher number of students in classrooms, who is causing great anguish to municipalities using taxpayers' dollars. I know Mr Wettlaufer wants to stand up in the House and defend the Premier going on television using tax dollars from the ministries to put forward a clearly partisan message. If the Premier wants to stand in this House and make his case, if the Premier wants to spend money from the Progressive Conservative Party to make his case, that is acceptable. When he uses the money from ministries to give a clearly partisan message, that is wrong.

We heard the Minister of Education and Training today, on a setup question from one of his members, denouncing members of the teaching profession for putting forward their case, and yet they look at the Premier putting forward his case with their money, with their tax dollars.

**Mr Marcel Beaubien (Lambton):** What happened? Where were you?

**The Deputy Speaker:** The member for Lambton.

**Mr Bradley:** If a government is involved in providing information to people that is direct information, nobody objects. You didn't hear one person in this House object when the Minister of Health had advertising about getting inoculations for measles — nobody. That's a good expenditure. When the government advertises tenders, that's a reasonable expenditure. When the government has straight information — in other words, not propaganda, as many governments had over the years — to provide to people, then that's legitimate.

What the Premier of this province is doing is illegitimate. It's unfair. I believe it's illegal because he is using those tax dollars to put forward a clearly partisan message.

**Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener):** To explain what needs to be done.

**Mr Bradley:** The member for Kitchener says it's to explain what's done. Now, that is silly. The government has all of its resources. You have more public relations people in one office over there than the opposition has to its availability at all. There, you have them all. There are



all kinds of spin doctors, all kinds of public relations people working in the ministries and for the ministers. Some of them you've taken out of the phone book, by the way. We know they still exist, but you've taken them out of the phone book so nobody will see that they exist.

If they want to make the case, that's fine. If any government member makes the case, I may not agree with it, but that's legitimate debate. But when you're taking taxpayers' dollars out of their pockets to give a partisan message to the people of this province, that is wrong. That is morally wrong, that is ethically wrong, that's unfair, that's not healthy for democracy.

I must say to the member for Kitchener, I am deeply disappointed that the newspapers have not run editorials on this, that there hasn't been more of an outcry in the news media. I know the owners of the stations, the owners of the networks, are going to be quite happy to receive the money that comes from this. I will get to Conrad Black in a while, because my friend from Nepean points to that.

The owners of the television stations themselves are going to be happy to get those ads. Something smelled fishy, by the way, when two things happened: one, we asked the Ministry of Health, "Are you going to be spending money on ads?" and they say: "Oh, no, no. That's just municipal affairs and education." Now we turn on the television set and there's Mike Harris on a government propaganda ad again, not information, but a propaganda ad. That's unfair. I think genuinely fairminded government members would be opposed to that.

What you do with the allocation for your caucus is your business. I know that. Some people complain about that. I don't, quite frankly. I think that's quite legitimate. There's a budget provided to the political parties. You get more because you have more members, but that's the result of the election. That's fair. But the government's advertising on television is clearly unfair, and the people of this province should know that every time they see Mike Harris reading a teleprompter on television for the government ad, they are paying for that ad.

I'm surprised that the list of legislation this afternoon is not a list prohibiting that, because I remember this government was going to be so different. They were penny-pinchers, with no money for advertising of this kind: "We are going to be the penny-pinchers." Yet there they are, in the most blatant case of propaganda, engaging in that, with no shame at all, apparently.

I want to talk about a couple of other important things. The member for Nepean is eager for me to get into the concentration of power in the hands of one person, but I want to look at one of the bills this government wants to bring forward. This is the developers' bill you want, and they've been calling for this. At the very time you are taking away funds from municipalities, at the very time you are dumping very onerous new responsibilities on them, you're taking away one of the areas where they could derive some funds, and that is development charges. That will make the developers happy, and no doubt you'll have to build even bigger halls to hold your fund-raisers, to get all those developers in. But what about the municipalities, the municipal councillors? The premier calls them whiners. Hazel McCallion, the mayor

of Mississauga, wouldn't be fooled by this. She's very opposed, as are many municipalities.

I'm saying let's get rid of that bill. Bring in that truck safety bill. Let's get to that one this week. That's the important bill. We can do that tomorrow or the next day or the next day. Let's have that before the winter break comes. We're ready to proceed with that. There's a consensus. But no, you're busy trying to do something for your developer friends, and that's what that's all about.

I was under the impression when this government was in power that all the industries would be staying around, they'd be flocking to Ontario, yet I look at the job losses in my own community of St Catharines: Foster Wheeler, 188 jobs gone; Kelsey-Hayes, 135; Phona Corp, 60; ITT Automotive, 100 jobs gone from there; Mott's — that's Cadbury Schweppes — 175 jobs gone there; Beaver Lumber, 59; Court Industries, part of that operation went to the US, 20 jobs; over 200 jobs in the St Catharines General Hospital; and heaven knows how many jobs when you've closed more hospitals.

We're losing jobs. I thought, with the Mike Harris agenda, that everybody would be flocking to Ontario. I thought when my friend the member for Lincoln brought forward his report deregulating everything in this province, everybody would love it and would move to Ontario. But you've got to understand that they want a quality of health care and they want a quality of life which is different from other communities, and that's what we need to build up in this province.

I notice today, and we see it every day, that one third of the budget of the Ministry of Environment has vanished, one third of the staff gone. That means they can't carry out the inspections, that means they can't carry out the enforcement, that means they can't do their job, so the prosecutions are down, the convictions are down. The government members would say, "Oh, that's because everybody's behaving today." Nonsense. That's because you're no longer looking for the problems that exist in the environment. You will pay a price in the future for ignoring our environment and unfortunately society will pay a price as well.

1740

I noticed, for instance, a recent story in the St Catharines Standard that Doug Draper wrote:

"The provincial government has eliminated the post of coordinator for an international cleanup program that was just getting back on track for Lake Ontario.

"The position of Lake Ontario coordinator, held for about three years by Henri Selles of the Ontario Ministry of Environment and Energy, was eliminated in the wake of an overall 30% cut the Tory government made to the ministry last month."

It's just another example. The Americans look and say: "We can't believe this. Ontario used to be the leader."

"Ontario just seems to be walking away from its commitment to the lakes," said Margaret Wooster, executive director of Great Lakes United, a Buffalo-based coalition of Canadian and American citizens around the basin.

"Wooster said her group and others are still reeling from news earlier this month that the province had cut



funding and staff for cleanups of the Niagara River, Hamilton Harbour and 14 other pollution hot spots around the lakes."

**Mr Derwyn Shea (High Park-Swansea):** Jim, we've been doing it for the Americans for a number of years. You know that.

**Mr Bradley:** I can't believe the member for High Park-Swansea would be supporting this government in cutting one third of the environment budget and one third of the staff, because I remember he used to be supportive of the environment when he sat on city council.

**Mr Shea:** When you were the minister, what did you do to get the Americans to contribute more money?

**Mr Bradley:** And when I was the minister he was supportive. The budget was increasing in those days. The resources were available in those days. We put the investigation and enforcement branch in place. It was great. Those were the days. I challenge the member for High Park-Swansea, who intervenes this afternoon —

*Interjection.*

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** I would ask the member for High Park-Swansea to come to order. Heckling is out of order and I would ask him to come to order.

**Mr Bradley:** You ask any independent person. You are indeed cutting the Ministry of the Environment budget. Don't be so darned hypocritical over there.

**The Speaker:** Member for St Catharines, that's unparliamentary language.

**Mr Bradley:** I agree with you, Mr Speaker. The word "phoney" comes to my mind somehow in this whole debate. I won't attribute it to anybody, but I will use the word, just to say the word "phoney" in general.

I know that in the context of all this legislation coming forward, you're wondering about our friend Conrad Black, a good friend of the government. He would probably support the member for High Park-Swansea, would Conrad Black. What's happened in Alberta is that the Calgary Herald, which was anti-Ralph Klein, has, surprise of surprises, done a complete turnaround and is now fully supporting Ralph Klein. What is the difference? The difference is that Conrad Black purchased the newspaper. Mr Black and Mr Radler say: "We don't interfere with this. We don't interfere at all."

My friend from Nepean had been holding up a sign when the present Speaker was not here. It said "VLTs" on one of them and "Conrad Black" on the other. The reason he was holding that up is because he knows that his newspaper, the Ottawa Citizen, is being transformed into a right-wing rant. In fact, I look at a couple of the people who were hired recently. Let me share with you, Mr Speaker, because you'll remember when you used to be a Conservative — now you're neutral and independent — going to those conventions. You'd see the YPCs, who were right of anything we knew around here, so far right that they were right of anything here. They hired one of them. Let me tell you who it was: Dan Gardner. What was his qualification? Well, two years previously he was the policy adviser to Mike Harris and previous to that to the Fraser Institute. Then they hired another fellow, whose name escapes me, who was working for

the Reform Party for the last two years and the Fraser Institute before that.

**Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin):** That's a good balance.

**Mr Bradley:** That's the balance they have there.

The member for Willowdale, who's a little bit of a moderate, at least, will find this amusing. Do you know what Dan Gardner wrote in one of his columns? He said that Mike Harris wasn't a neo-con; he wasn't right wing enough. He was no Margaret Thatcher, said Dan Gardner. I was beside myself, because I can't think of any Premier we've had in this province who was as right wing as Premier Harris. I see this happening, and I say, "What is becoming of a balanced newspaper?" It's the effect of one person owning the majority of newspapers in this country.

**Hon Charles Harnick (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs):** Tell us about the legislative calendar.

**Mr Bradley:** That's what I'm on to. I'm on to the legislative calendar because it's how it's going to be covered. I look out and I see them taking over all the newspapers. Don't think the people who work in those newspapers aren't afraid; don't think they aren't looking over their shoulder to see if Mr Radler is watching to see what's going on. It's not healthy. It wouldn't be healthy if it was a left-wing person, a right-wing person or anybody else. It's not healthy to have one person, through Hollinger, controlling 58 out of 104 newspapers in this country and out there like a vulture taking more and more away.

What happens with these newspapers? The first thing they do is fire people out the door, especially those who disagree with Conrad Black. But they fire other people out the door, and the jobs are lost forever. A lot of these people are wondering where they are going to work. The Speaker is wondering how this relates to this motion.

I should note, by the way, that the Speaker has his arm in a cast or a sling, it looks like a sling, because he was injured. He has a separated shoulder, I read in the paper, from playing hockey on the weekend in Montreal, not for the Conservative team, for the Legiskaters. Apparently he was injured at this time.

There were people in the press gallery — I know the table will be interested in this — who said it was retributive justice, it was some kind of intervention from somewhere because the Speaker, may God strike me down for saying this, was misleading the House last week when he said that the press gallery had lost to the Legiskaters when in fact they had defeated the Legiskaters seven to one. That's the only time in my life I'm going to be able to get away with saying, "misleading the House," because the Speaker knows it was true. But I want to say to the Speaker we forgive him for this. We like some of his rulings — some of his rulings, that is — especially the one that denounced the government for its television advertising campaign.

**Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor-Sandwich):** And the health ads.

**Mr Bradley:** And the health ads and others. I think the Speaker has been totally independent, and that's why we let him play on a hockey team with all of the Conserva-



tives, because we know his mind won't be poisoned with some of the ideas emanating from that caucus. Indeed, if he were still in that caucus or in that cabinet, they would be in a lot less trouble than they are today. I hope the Premier hears and acts upon that.

**The Speaker:** Further debate. The member for Algoma.

**Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma):** I would like the unanimous consent of the House to be able to divide my time, the leadoff for our caucus, between myself and the member for Dovercourt.

**The Speaker:** Unanimous consent to divide the time for the members for Algoma and Dovercourt? Agreed?

**Mr Wildman:** I appreciate that from the members of the House. I have only a very brief time to speak this afternoon. I want to address some of the issues that we face for the rest of this month and March and leading into April on the legislative calendar. All members will know that the government is involved in the most radical changes in the institutions and public services that this province has seen in at least 100 years, if not more. But for some reason the government is determined to ram this through. They're arguing that it all has to be done in the next few weeks so that it can be in place by this autumn for the municipal election campaigns. Frankly, I don't understand the reason for the rush. If it was simply dealing with governance in the municipal sector and in the education sector, or for that matter the services that each level of government, provincial and municipal, would be providing in the province, then there is no reason for this to be in place by the next municipal election. It would be better to be more deliberate about it, to consider carefully what the ramifications are of the various changes proposed so that we could do it properly.

1750

**Mr Shea:** Do what?

**Mr Wildman:** The changes this government is bringing about, at the municipal level, the education level and in terms of services the province provides and the local authorities provide. For some reason, this government wants to rush it through. I know and I think all members really understand the reason for the hurry. The fact is that this government has decided it wants to take a significant amount of spending out of the system.

In education under Bill 104, which has been time-allocated, the government wants to get control of education spending so it can take another \$1 billion out of education. That is going to have a devastating effect in the classrooms of this province.

On the municipal side, the government wants to transfer to the municipal side, to the municipal level of government significant numbers of services that have never even been contemplated before being handled by municipalities, in order to bring about changes that would result in significant changes in costs. It's not just Bill 103, which has also been time-allocated. The government is determined to ram in a megacity over the objections of the majority of the people of Toronto because it has decided this is the best way it can bring about the kind of downloading we've never seen before in this province, as a way of ensuring that certain services that in the past

have been provided by the province will be the responsibility of the municipalities, and thus will lead to significant cuts in services or, I'm afraid, property tax increases, or probably both.

It's interesting on Bill 103 that the government has said it will not pay any attention to a referendum. There has been a referendum proposed. Even though this government and the Premier say they are in favour of referenda for deciding issues, they have determined that on this particular matter, it is too complicated for the people of Toronto to be able to make their own decision. Interestingly enough, the government says it is not too complicated for the people of Ontario, the citizens of Canada, to vote on the Constitution of Canada, the fundamental law of this country, but it is too complicated to vote on whether or not there should be one city or six in this area.

On both Bills 103 and 104, which have been time-allocated, there are hundreds, really thousands of people who have indicated they wish to make presentations, and the government in its time allocation motions has limited the number of people who can make presentations because it doesn't want to hear what the people have to say.

On Bill 104, just in Toronto, 1,050 people have wanted to come before the committee. This was without any advertising, without any requests; 1,050 people wanted to come and make presentations, most of them parents, about the education of their kids. We've only got four days allocated for Toronto under the government's time allocation motion for Bill 104. It is going to be impossible to hear more than 100 people in Toronto, one tenth of the people who have said they want to make presentations. Outside Toronto, under the time allocation motion, there are only going to be six communities where people will be able to make representations on a bill that affects every school board and every school and every student in Ontario.

On Bill 103, of course, there have been hundreds of people who have indicated they want to make presentations and they won't be heard. It's really disastrous when you have 90% of the people who have indicated they want to make presentations on important legislation, to have input, to have influence, to try to bring about amendments or changes, 90% of them told they can't make presentations, they can't be heard.

I said the government's agenda is a major downloading of services to the municipalities and to the municipal sector; downloading of costs and increasing of property taxes. Nobody argues that we shouldn't have property taxes helping to pay for hard services: roads, streets, street lighting, garbage collection, water and sewer, sidewalks, all of those things that have a direct relationship to property values. It makes sense that property taxes help to pay for those.

What is really extreme and completely unprecedented in this downloading is the proposal that other soft services be downloaded on to the municipal property tax. For the first time in history, public health is going to be partially paid for by property taxes.

**Hon Ms Mushinski:** It is already.



**Mr Wildman:** No, I'm talking about long-term care, the seniors and the disabled. And social services: an increase in the portion that is going to be paid will be paid locally. This is a very neat trick that this government is trying to pull on the people of this province. They have said they will take education off the property tax, the \$5.4 billion. They won't guarantee that they'll replace that in grants, but they've said they'll take that off the property tax and in exchange they're going to download these other soft services.

We all know that education is fairly stable and may in fact go down somewhat as enrollments decline over the next few years. We also know that social service costs, welfare, are very unpredictable and are related to changes in the economy. As unemployment increases, the cost will go up. We certainly know that long-term care, as the population ages, is going to grow exponentially. So what this government is doing is taking to the provincial government's responsibility costs which will be fairly stable or may even go down a little over the next few years and they're transferring to the beleaguered property taxpayers costs which will go up and continue to go up. It isn't a wash, as the minister has tried to argue. In fact, there's about a \$1-billion shortfall. The costs that are being transferred to the municipal taxpayers will grow and the costs to the provincial government will remain fairly stable.

Those are the two major pieces of legislation in this calendar. They have been time-allocated. They've been rammed through. There's been no agreement. The government is determined to get them in place by early April no matter what, no matter how much opposition there is towards them in the province.

But there are also many other pieces of legislation in this major restructuring:

Bill 84, the firefighters' legislation, which the firefighters themselves have publicly stated they don't want, they

don't like, they don't want to have passed, is being forced on them. It's hurting their collective bargaining.

We have Bill 98, the development charges, which will make it more difficult for municipalities to fund for growth in their areas.

Police services amendments, which are going to transfer costs to the rural municipalities, among other things.

Changes in municipal finance bills, that is, assessments, while at the same time we don't have enough assessors trained to do the job and we're going to have these drive-by assessments apparently, thanks to Al Leach.

Bill 107, the water and sewer legislation, which is designed to try and enable the privatization of these services.

Bill 108, provincial offences, and Bill 109, the public libraries act, which in fact may bring in more user fees for library services that up to now have been free. This is a major downloading.

This government likes to argue there's only one taxpayer. Yes, there is only one taxpayer, and what you're doing here is transferring from the one pocket to the other. You're taking the cost off income taxes and transferring the cost to property taxes for that one taxpayer. Property taxes are much more unfair than income taxes, and the shift from education taxes to these others is not a wash, is not acceptable.

We will fight this. We are not going to agree. We are not going to accept the kind of ramming through this government seems determined to bring in. Instead of doing it in a proper, thought-out fashion and taking the time that is required, they are determined to get it through by the end of this spring so it will be in place for this fall. There's no reason for this hurry. Rethink.

**The Speaker:** It now being 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned till 1:30 tomorrow.

*The House adjourned at 1801.*



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CA20N  
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-D23



No. 168

N° 168

ISSN 1180-2987

**Legislative Assembly  
of Ontario**

First Session, 36th Parliament

**Assemblée législative  
de l'Ontario**

Première session, 36<sup>e</sup> législature

**Official Report  
of Debates  
(Hansard)**

**Journal  
des débats  
(Hansard)**

**Tuesday 25 February 1997**

**Mardi 25 février 1997**

**Speaker**  
Honourable Chris Stockwell

**Président**  
L'honorable Chris Stockwell

**Clerk**  
Claude L. DesRosiers

**Greffier**  
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# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 25 February 1997

# ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 25 février 1997

*The House met at 1333.  
Prayers.*

## MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

### TRUCKING SAFETY

**Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-Walkerville):** Today we're reminded about the difference between substantive public policy and bluster. Last week, with much fanfare, the Minister of Transportation announced long-overdue changes to highway safety; that is, dealing with the issue of unsafe truck wheels.

We, the opposition, said that we would help the government pass this bill as quickly as possible. We sat down and agreed that this amendment, even though it doesn't deal with the whole question, is important enough that it ought to be front and centre in this Legislature and on the government's agenda. The minister, with great fanfare, said how important this is for the government, how important it is for road safety in Ontario and how urgent it is to move as quickly as possible.

Lo and behold, what happens? Nothing. Press conference, flyers, publicity, bill introduced and the government says it won't bring the bill up for debate or a vote. Lots of glitz, lots of bluster, but where's the beef? No substance.

We say to the government today: Put aside your legislation to raise property taxes, put aside your desire to close hospitals and bring forward the truck safety bill today. Let's spend a Legislative day on it and —

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Thank you.

### EDUCATION LEGISLATION

### LÉGISLATION SUR L'ÉDUCATION

**Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South):** There are many citizens across the riding of Cochrane South who are truly worried about where this government is going with public education. They worry because they know how important education is for their children and for the wellbeing of their community itself.

With this in mind, there's a group that's come together in the community of Timmins called Citizens for the Preservation of Public Education. Why have they come together? Because the government has decided, with this legislative committee, that they will not be coming to Cochrane South or the city of Timmins to listen to what people have to say about Bill 104.

Citizens in our community have come together with me to form this committee so that people in our community can have their say, express their views and their

concerns in regard to Bill 104, and then we will go and present to the legislative committee in Sudbury and let people know what we think about Bill 104. I think it's unacceptable in a democracy that a government undergoes a massive change such as it has with education and doesn't give people a right to have a say.

Il y a beaucoup de personnes dans nos communautés de Cochrane-Sud et Timmins qui ont vraiment peur pour où s'en va le gouvernement avec la législation, la Loi 104. Cette loi va changer fondamentalement l'éducation dans notre province, et le gouvernement n'a pas pris le temps pour consulter le monde à Cochrane-Sud.

Avec ça dans l'idée, un comité va être mis en place appelé les Citoyens pour la préservation de l'éducation publique qui va faire les audiences publiques propres, et nous, les citoyens de Timmins, allons à Sudbury pour présenter de la part de tous ces citoyens ce qu'on pense de la Loi 104.

### MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

**Mr Douglas B. Ford (Etobicoke-Humber):** I rise today to outline what is clearly a waste of taxpayers' money, dollars, being staged by those opposed to our government's proposed legislation for a unified Toronto.

First of all, in my riding the mayor of Etobicoke has stated that a phone poll to gauge public opinion is a waste of money. I am not alone in my belief that taxpayers' money is being wasted by municipal governments fighting amalgamation. A letter to the editor of a community newspaper in my riding stated: "Fewer politicians please. And let's start with those on our own council who choose to waste more of our money."

Our government believes a unified Toronto would mean an enhanced lifestyle and greater benefits. An Etobicoke business consultant yesterday told public hearings on amalgamation proposals that he witnessed unification at first hand several years ago in Winnipeg. He noted how little things change. Metro was called a "seamless and integrated whole" and it was suggested it should be governed that way. It's encouraging to see that when the facts are presented fairly, the idea of one Toronto can be accepted by the general public.

This happened yesterday during a panel show I participated in for a Toronto radio station. By the end of the program, the show's host acknowledged the tide had turned, with a greater number supporting one Toronto —

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Thank you.

### JUSTICE SYSTEM

**Ms Annamarie Castrilli (Downsview):** Yesterday the sentence was rendered in the case of Dr Arvo Alfred, a doctor found guilty of sexual or indecent assault. The



sentence imposed yesterday has sparked serious concerns. Dr Alfred was sentenced to nine months in jail, 240 hours of community service and two years less a day under house arrest, this despite the fact that he assaulted 10 of his former patients, nine females and one male. The prosecution had asked for 10 to 12 years.

This government has repeatedly spoken of its commitment to law and order and victims' rights. Now is the time to prove it. The victims in this awful case are outraged. The consequences of what has been done to them will remain with them for a lifetime. I urge the Attorney General to immediately consider the following: first, launching an appeal in this matter, and second, instituting a review of sentencing guidelines. Respect for victims' rights, if it is to mean anything, requires nothing less.

1340

### EDUCATION LEGISLATION

**Mr Len Wood (Cochrane North):** My statement today is about education and the millions of dollars in cuts to education. As we all know, the Fewer School Boards Act affects every student, citizen, parent and school board in Ontario. As indicated in a report produced by the Ontario Public School Boards' Association, this proposed legislation has even more profound consequences for the local governments in northern Ontario.

This government speaks of offering equal education opportunity for all students in the province. Does this same principle not extend to all citizens? Shouldn't a citizen in northern Ontario have access to a locally elected education representative regardless of where they live? Given the size of the jurisdictions — some as large as France — and the climate, access to locally elected school boards will be removed for many. Concerned parents and taxpayers will be faced with phoning long distance to try and access information about their local schools. Decisions affecting the local community will no longer be made by community leaders.

You are rushing to push forward this anti-democratic legislation, driven by your agenda to take full control of our education system so you can make further cuts down the road. Clearly this government is only interested in cuts to classroom education, which is different from what it promised during the election campaign, and taking billions of dollars out of education like the federal Liberals did in Ottawa over the last three and a half years.

### FAMILY LITERACY WEEK

**Mrs Julia Munro (Durham-York):** The region of Durham has declared February 22 to March 1 as Family Literacy Week. The Literacy Network of Durham Region stresses that we all should be dedicated to tackling Ontario's literacy problem because we cannot afford not to. Roughly two adults in every five lack the literacy skills needed to handle successfully common everyday literacy tasks.

The literacy problem is a family problem, because the link between child and parent literacy has to do with the role parents play in helping their children learn to read. There is a strong connection between low literacy levels

and poor health, higher-than-average rates of unemployment, low income, poor academic achievement by their children, poor social integration, low self-esteem and above-average rates of incarceration.

Literacy problems tend to be passed from one generation to the next. One of the best ways to support a child's learning is to ensure that his or her parents have opportunities to improve their own literacy skills if required. That's why all of us should be supporting organizations like the Literacy Network of Durham Region.

### HEALTH CARE FUNDING

**Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor-Sandwich):** Today I have more postcards to deliver to the Minister of Health. The postcards say, "Help save our health care." They also show the various facts that exist in Windsor-Essex county as to the severe underfunding of health costs in our area. May I tell you that if the plans go forward, the west side of the county will have no emergency service. This government has refused to reinvest funding to build up services in other areas of the county. We simply are losing service.

We found it very interesting that today we read, "Peterborough Hospitals Open Beds After Death." Thanks to Dalton McGuinty bringing this issue into the House, the hospital in Peterborough has reinstated beds. Is this what we have to do to make the Conservative government, the Harris government, understand that the cuts are hurting people?

To the Minister of Health, this is just the beginning. There are many more of them coming, and I want to thank the people — Earle Dunham, Mary Kroskie, Walter Kroskie — who really care about health care in Essex county. I say to the Minister of Health, you must listen. Don't wait for people to die, as was the case in Peterborough, before you turn your attention to Windsor-Essex county. We won't stand for it. The people won't stand for it.

### CARDIAC SURGERY

**Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma):** I rise to raise a critical situation for the residents of Algoma district and Sault Ste Marie with regard to the long waiting list for cardiac surgery at Sudbury Memorial Hospital. Because of the cap on surgical cases, there is a backlog of over 250. By simple mathematics, it will take some five years to elapse before we can again reach a satisfactory waiting period for cardiac cases in our area. That of course assumes that the cardiac waiting list will not continue to increase as it has over the past year.

The head of cardiac services in Sault Ste Marie, Dr Gould, has indicated that three patients have died in Sault Ste Marie as the result of the long waiting list during the last two weeks. Two of these cases will not appear in the normal statistics because they both died during cardiac surgery. As a result of their long wait, their hearts had deteriorated so severely that they were too weak to sustain themselves through the operation.

Another patient was so frightened of being on such a long waiting list that he sold his home in order to finance his surgery in the United States. This is exactly the type



of situation that our health care system is supposed to prevent. Patients are being reduced to financial ruin because of the cost of obtaining health care because of this long waiting —

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Thank you, member.

### SPECIAL OLYMPICS

**Mr Tim Hudak (Niagara South):** I rise today in the House, as other members have recently done, to congratulate the over 2,000 athletes from over 80 countries who travelled to Toronto and Collingwood earlier this month to participate in the 1997 Special Olympics World Winter Games. However, I would particularly like to recognize the extraordinary achievements of some residents from my very own riding.

About two weeks ago, among great fanfare and fire engine sirens, Fort Erie welcomed home its champions, the Fort Erie Phantoms floor hockey team, which captured the silver medal at this year's games. In fact, in the championship game the Phantoms narrowly missed capturing the gold; they lost 4-3 in triple overtime to the dreaded Team Russia.

The Phantoms are the team that made good, a group of players who rose up from small-town Ontario to face off against the world's best at the Special Olympics.

It was certainly my dream growing up, playing hockey on Lindberg Drive, to one day face the Russians in international competition. The Phantoms have fulfilled that shared child's dream by bringing back the medals to their home town, Fort Erie.

Special congratulations also are in order to Melissa Brooks and Maryanne Bland. Melissa captured the gold medal and Maryanne the silver in the individual skills competition. The team also is under the able management of Marlene Davies and the Hills. My congratulations to the great coaches. Remember: No trades in the off season.

I trust I speak for all members of the assembly when I look in the Speaker's gallery today and offer my greatest congratulations to these skilled and courageous athletes. Congratulations.

### VISITORS

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** I'll follow the member for Niagara South. We have a special group of athletes today that I will introduce. I'd like to inform the members of the Legislative Assembly that in the Speaker's gallery today we have the Fort Erie Phantoms, winners of the silver medal in floor hockey at the Special Olympics World Winter Games. Please join me in welcoming them. Welcome.

### COURT RULING

**Mr Mike Colle (Oakwood):** On a point of privilege, Mr Speaker: As you know, earlier this year I asked you to rule on a pamphlet distributed by the Minister of Municipal Affairs in regard to Bill 103. Your ruling was that there was a prima facie case for contempt.

I would like to bring to your attention a connection to that same bill as it relates to the Ontario Court of Justice, which ruled today that the appointed trustees in Bill 103 are to be found to be, as Justice Brennan said today, "I conclude that the orders in council of December 18, 1996, were made without authority and are of no legal effect. The appointments are therefore void. The appointees' actions have no legal effect until they are appointed pursuant to a statute in force."

As you know, with the pamphlet the concern I had was that the pamphlet assumed that the legislation was a done deal, that there would be no attention to the processes of the House in debating and amending this bill. I find that the trustees are very similar in approach in terms of trying to establish the fact that on the day the bill was introduced, December 17, the trustees had power to act as of the day the bill was introduced.

I think the court ruling reaffirms our contention that this contravenes the basic processes and respect for the parliamentary process. In fact, in one of the affidavits filed before Justice Brennan, the contention of one of the trustees, Ms Valerie A. Gibbons, was that basically under Bill 103 she had "full powers to act under the proposed legislation because it is implicit in our form of majority government that legislation introduced by the government will pass." So these trustees went into this designation with the assumption from the minister and Bill 103 that the bill would pass; therefore she had power. The court today ruled that this is wrong, that you can't assume to give these people power unless the bill is passed.

### 1350

As you know, former Speaker Fraser ruled, and you referred to this in your ruling, that, "A contempt may be an act or an omission; it does not have to actually obstruct or impede the House or a member; it merely has to have the tendency to produce such results. Matters ranging from minor breaches of decorum to grave attacks against the authority of Parliament may be considered as contempt."

I'm going to forward a copy of Justice Brennan's ruling to you for your perusal, Mr Speaker — I have one here — so that when you deliberate, you can refer to this ruling. There are a number of interesting sections. The interesting thing too, if you look at the ruling — the government continues to basically find ways of circumventing the due processes of this Legislature. One of their arguments before the court was that they were referring to the Lieutenant Governor's exercise of royal prerogative, but the justice was clear in rejecting it, saying, "I am impelled to the finding that the royal prerogative was not in the contemplation of the Lieutenant Governor in Council at the time these orders in council were made."

In other words, they're trying to find a loophole. Their intent was very clear basically to make these trustees effective the day the bill was introduced, and these trustees have been functioning right across Metro since December 17. They have been meeting with municipal councillors, they have been meeting with staff; they are still meeting and they are still working.

In fact, during the hearings I asked for the trustees to come before the committee and the assistant deputy minister of municipal affairs said, "They can't come



before the committee on Bill 103 because the trustees are being faced with a legal challenge." I said, "If they are faced with a legal challenge, why are they still functioning as trustees?" which she admitted they were. So I said, "If they're still functioning, if the excuse is the legal challenge, therefore they should stop functioning as trustees," but they continue to function, again based on something that was introduced in the House, not in legislation that was passed.

Therefore I ask you, Mr Speaker, to take a close look at the findings of Justice Brennan. You will see that there's a clear case for contempt here. These trustees are even worse than the pamphlet, because not only was the pamphlet at your door the day the bill was introduced, but these trustees were empowered to —

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Member for Oakwood, I think I understand the point you're making. I understand what you're saying. Allow me to review the comments you made and report back.

**Mr Tony Silipo (Dovercourt):** Point of order, Mr Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The same point?

**Mr Silipo:** A similar point, Speaker, but I want to make a separate request of you.

You will recall that a few weeks ago I raised a specific point of privilege right on this point in suggesting to you that you find a breach of privilege or a contempt of the House in the actions of the government in proceeding to have these trustees act without the authority of the legislation because the legislation has not been passed. You at that time essentially, I think, ruled that there was no breach that you saw of the procedures but that there may be a legal issue.

Obviously, as we now know, the legal issue has indeed been resolved, at least at this stage, to the effect that the government's actions have been found to be wrong, to be in contravention of the law. The government's actions have been found to be without authority and the appointments have been struck down and have been rendered null and void.

I think, Speaker, at this point there are at the very least a couple of things that should be taking place. The first is that I would ask that you ensure — and I ask this specifically of you, Speaker, because again, as members of this Parliament, we have no recourse other than through you to ensure that that court order is carried out as it applies to the proceedings of the House, not as it applies to anything extraneous to here, but as it applies to the proceedings of this House, and that is to ensure that any actions that have been taken by the trustees are seen to be rendered null and void.

Secondly, Speaker, this has implications not just for the provisions of the trustees under Bill 103, but I believe has implications for the provisions at least in Bill 104, because there too there have been at least comparable positions appointed, two trustees; they're called commissioners there. I believe there are implications as well for whatever actions those two individuals may have taken to date, because the legislation under Bill 104, as you know, is pretty much in the same process of the Parliament as is 103.

Thirdly, Speaker, I would ask that through you we get some indication from the Minister of Municipal Affairs or indeed the acting Premier, given, as I say, that this court decision has repercussions not just with respect to Bill 103 but also with respect to Bill 104, as to what actions the government is intending to take. I would have expected that the minister would have come in today and made a statement on this very important development.

I believe that you called for ministers' statements. I didn't hear anything. I didn't hear any minister standing up. I know that you can't force ministers to make statements, but I would ask through your office and through your chair to request, if the Minister of Municipal Affairs or if the acting Premier is prepared to make a statement on this issue, certainly I believe on this side of the House we would be prepared to give unanimous consent for that to happen.

**The Speaker:** I will take your comments as well and review them when ruling on the member for Oakwood's point of — you said point of order?

**Mr Colle:** Point of privilege.

**The Speaker:** Point of privilege.

Point of order? Same point? Different point. The member for Algoma.

**Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma):** I would ask for the unanimous consent of the assembly to revert to ministers' statements so that we can have a statement from the ministry with regard to this court ruling.

**The Speaker:** The member for Algoma is seeking unanimous consent to revert to ministers' statements for the following reasons —

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker:** Agreed?

*Interjections.*

**Mr Silipo:** You are not going to say anything, Al? Why do we have to ask you a question? This is the most momentous development on this day.

**Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine):** Tell us what you are going to do.

**The Speaker:** Order. Members for Beaches-Woodbine and Dovercourt, please come to order. I have now given you my undertaking. I'll report back on both the point of privilege of the member for Oakwood and the member for Dovercourt's point of order.

There being no further points of order or privilege, it's time for oral questions.

1400

## ORAL QUESTIONS

### COURT RULING

**Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition):** My question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs. This morning, as was just discussed, the Ontario Court of Justice ruled that your appointment of megacity trustees was without authority, of no legal effect, and void. In effect, the judge who ruled on this matter has told us that those trustees who are out there today purporting to act on the basis of some legislative authority have no such authority of any kind.



For months now, Minister, we have been warning you that your megacity Bill 103 process tramples on basic democratic principles. Today a judge ruled that the process you're using to implement your law is illegal. Minister, you would not listen to us. Will you now listen to a judge and withdraw this bill?

**Hon Al Leach (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing):** We understand the court has made a decision and we respect that decision. I can say that the ruling doesn't surprise me, because we have stated on numerous occasions, both in this House and publicly, that the trustees do not have any jurisdiction until such time as the legislation is passed. We've made that abundantly clear on many occasions.

Notwithstanding the decision of the judge, what we were doing was giving municipalities an opportunity to be prepared, should the legislation pass, so they would be able to deal with the proposed legislation in an appropriate manner. We have continuously said that the trustees did not have any legal jurisdiction until such time as the legislation passes.

**Mr McGuinty:** What this is is another example of contempt shown by this minister either for us as legislators of this House or the public. This is the very same minister who was found to have been in contempt of this Legislature, the same minister who said he would ignore the voice of the people when they speak by way of referenda and the same minister who introduced Bill 26.

In ruling against you, Minister, the judge said your actions were "contrary to the responsible actions of government." That is a very, very severe criticism of government. In effect, the judge was saying that your actions were in keeping with the actions of an irresponsible government.

I'm asking you now to do the responsible thing: Will you withdraw this bill, fully one third of which contains the now illegal provisions, and start afresh?

**Hon Mr Leach:** I first want to correct the record again. The Leader of the Opposition continues to say we were found in contempt and he knows that not to be correct. If anybody should be found in contempt, it's people who continue to make those arguments.

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Order. Minister?

**Hon Mr Leach:** When it goes back to the legislation, to Bill 103, there is nothing in that legislation that the judge found to be inappropriate. What he has said is that the orders in council should not have been processed until such time as the legislation was passed. I don't disagree with that. I think that's an appropriate ruling.

We have always said that the trustees don't have any authority until such time as the legislation passes. I don't know how many times I'm going to have to repeat that, but that's the case.

**Mr McGuinty:** Have the decency to admit that you've made a mistake. You've had a judge of the Ontario Court of Justice who has found that you have made a mistake. At least stand up there and tell us that you've made the mistake. Don't tell us that he doesn't know what he's talking about.

He also said, "...the will of the executive is being imposed before waiting for the legislative events to

unfold." That's what the judge said. I didn't say that. Minister, you were caught. Once again you tried to subvert the power of the Legislature and you got caught, just like in the case of Bill 26. You plowed ahead when everybody said that what you were doing was wrong. This is but another example. I wish it was an exception, but it is but another example of this government trying to do an end run around this Legislature.

Minister, what you did was anti-democratic. This ruling calls your entire megacity bill into question. I'll ask you one more time: Will you not do the right thing and withdraw it?

**Hon Mr Leach:** To repeat: What the judge, in my view, has ruled is that the orders in council should not have been processed until such time as the legislation is passed. We have repeatedly said — and I've said it in this House; it's recorded in Hansard — that the trustees do not have any jurisdiction until such time as the legislation is passed, and we continue to say that. What we were —

**Mr Mike Colle (Oakwood):** Oh no, you didn't say that. You are saying that now. You didn't say it before. Tell the truth.

**The Speaker:** Member for Oakwood, I ask you to withdraw that comment.

**Mr Colle:** On a point of privilege, Mr Speaker.

**The Speaker:** I want you to withdraw that comment, please, member for Oakwood.

**Mr Colle:** I withdraw my comment.

**The Speaker:** Minister?

**Hon Mr Leach:** What we were attempting to do was select the individuals that we felt were appropriate to be trustees so that they would be in place when the legislation was passed, in order that municipalities would have an opportunity to see what the rules of the game would be prior to the legislation being passed, but we have said repeatedly that the legislation has to be in place before they have any power.

## HOSPITAL RESTRUCTURING RESTRUCTURATION DES HÔPITAUX

**Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition):** My next question is for the Minister of Health. Yesterday, your hospital-closing gang rode into Ottawa-Carleton, ransacked and destroyed three hospitals and rode away with \$90 million of Ottawa-Carleton's health care dollars. The Riverside Hospital, the Salvation Army's Grace Hospital and the Montfort Hospital are among the most efficient and important community hospitals in the province.

Let me tell you why, and I'm going to start with the Riverside Hospital. This hospital has been recognized — the minister will know this — by the Canadian Council on Health Services Accreditation as one of the most cost-efficient and effective hospitals in the country. In fact, only 23 hospitals out of 1,800 have ever received this recognition. The Riverside was one of them. The people there have worked valiantly to get their costs down. How does this minister reward them? By giving them a death sentence. Why are you closing one of the most efficiently run hospitals in Ontario, the Riverside Hospital?



**Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Health):** The commission has made interim findings, recommendations for Ottawa-Carleton and a renewed hospital system for Ottawa-Carleton, and all members of the public and all members of this House have the opportunity over the next 30 days to make comment to the commission.

The honourable member talks about hospital accreditation, and yes, many hospitals have received a top rating, but it wasn't the building that received that rating. It was the people, the talented people who provide those services.

The thrust behind the commission's work and the health care policy of the government is to drive every dollar to front-line services to make sure those people are merged into other buildings so that they can continue to provide the top-quality service. At the end of the day, we want more nurses, more services and modern hospitals with new technology to provide for the needs of the people of Ontario and Ottawa-Carleton.

**Mr McGuinty:** Move on to the Grace Hospital. The Grace Hospital is run by the Salvation Army. The Grace specializes in two things and two things only, delivering babies and eye surgery, and it does both of those exceptionally well. Because it has specialized, it has high volumes and very low costs. The Salvation Army's Grace Hospital can provide sight-saving cataract surgery cheaper than just about any other hospital in the province. It may be small, but it is very, very efficient. It does what it does very well and at low cost. If you are so intent on finding savings, why is it that you are closing one of the best savers in the province when it comes to a hospital?

**Hon Mr Wilson:** The intent is to have a better hospital system. The amount of money that the government has put back into the health care system far exceeds anything we've seen in savings and, at the rate we're going, will probably far exceed anything we see in savings after the three- to four-year period of hospital restructuring. It isn't about savings; it's about making the system better. Time and time again, people raise concerns about problems in our hospitals today, and they make the case that we cannot sustain the current system, that the current system has problems and that we need to improve the system. That will be done by, yes, having fewer buildings, but having more services in the buildings that remain.

Seven hundred beds were closed in Ottawa-Carleton during the time that government was in office and the previous NDP government was in office. That's the equivalent of three mid-sized hospitals. All of the administration is still there; all of the maintenance, heat and hydro is still there. Those dollars need to be freed up and spent on patient services so that we have modern hospitals and more services for the people who need them.

**M. McGuinty :** L'hôpital Montfort est le seul hôpital de langue française en Ontario. Montfort est l'hôpital communautaire de la plus grande population francophone de la province.

La semaine dernière, votre ministère reconnaissait que le rapport coût-efficacité de Montfort était un des meilleurs en Ontario. Hier votre commission, qui n'a même pas eu la décence de traduire son rapport, a ordonné la fermeture de l'hôpital Montfort. Personne, pas une seule

personne de votre commission, ne pouvait répondre à des questions en français.

Montfort n'est pas un grand hôpital mais c'est un hôpital extrêmement important. Il est clair que votre commission n'a pas compris son importance pour notre communauté. Monsieur le Ministre, pourquoi fermez-vous le seul hôpital entièrement bilingue de l'Ontario ? Pourquoi fermez-vous le seul hôpital de la communauté franco-ontarienne ?

**Hon Mr Wilson:** The Health Services Restructuring Commission was very concerned and I think took great pains to ensure that French-language services will continue to be available to the francophone community in Ottawa-Carleton. The honourable member knows that the Ottawa General Hospital right now is the designated French-language hospital to provide those services.

The French Language Services Act remains in place. Parts of the heart institute are designated right now and also parts of CHEO. The commission made it clear that it has ordered that a plan for French-language services be in place in the very near future to ensure that access to those services is maintained in the restructured system.

With respect to the — I believe it was a genuine oversight of the commission. Dr Sinclair is issuing an apology to the people of eastern Ontario for not providing the documents in both official languages and for failing to provide those services at the press conference. I understand that apology is forthcoming today.

1410

## COURT RULING

**Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River):** My question is to the minister responsible for municipal affairs, although you'd hardly know it by the decisions that are emanating now from our courts.

Today, Judge Brennan sent your megacity trustees packing. He said that the unelected trustees you appointed to run Toronto and overrule its democratically elected representatives — Minister, you may laugh about this, but all kinds of people in this province believe in democratic government. They believe in responsible government. You may laugh at it.

Minister, to put it in brief, he said you broke the law. He said that you are trampling on people's democratic rights. He said you are acting "contrary to fundamental principles of responsible government."

Minister, will you finally show some respect for —

**Mr Alvin Curling (Scarborough North):** He's a puppet now.

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Order. I would ask the member for Scarborough North to withdraw that comment.

**Mr Curling:** I don't know what I said to be withdrawn, Mr Speaker. I said he was a puppet now.

**The Speaker:** I apologize, then. I misheard you.

**Mr Hampton:** Let me start again, Speaker. I'm asking the minister to finally show some respect for democracy, to finally show some respect for responsible government, to finally show some respect for people's democratic rights. Will you withdraw Bill 103, go back to the drawing board, involve the people who live in Metropolitan



Toronto and draft legislation that speaks to people's needs?

**Hon Al Leach (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing):** I'll repeat: The court has made a decision, a ruling on the orders in council that were processed. The bill itself is going through the legislative process, as it should. It's out at committee now. The courts didn't rule at all on anything in the bill. My understanding is that they have ruled that the orders in council shouldn't have been processed until such time as the bill was approved by this Legislature.

We have repeatedly stated that the trustees didn't have any authority until such time as the legislation was passed. We agreed to that, and we continue to agree with that judge's ruling that the trustees did not have any authority until the legislation was passed. What he has asked us to do is withdraw the orders in council, and we'll obviously comply with that.

**Mr Hampton:** This minister has a unique capacity to show contempt for this Legislature and an equally unique capacity to show contempt for the people of this province.

What the judge said, and you should perhaps read this judgement, was that you don't have the royal prerogative any more, that you can't use the royal prerogative of kings and queens and shove it down people's throats. That's what he says in this judgement. He says very clearly that your so-called appointments were made without authority and are of no legal effect. He says you can't try to use the royal prerogative to shove it down people's throats either.

I throw your selective reading of this judgement aside. There has never been a condemnation of a government or a condemnation of a cabinet minister equal to this judgement. He says you don't have the rights of kings or queens.

I repeat the question: Will you go back to the drawing board? Will you withdraw your bill which tries to override democratic —

**The Speaker:** Thank you. Minister?

**Hon Mr Leach:** I'm going to be repeating our position through this series of questions because in our view what the judge has said is that the government did not have the authority to issue orders in council until such time as the legislation was passed. We have repeatedly stated and agreed with that position.

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker:** Order. I'm having a great deal of difficulty. To the members for Lake Nipigon and Algoma, it's very difficult to hear the answer. I would ask that you come to order, please.

**Mr Gilles Pouliot (Lake Nipigon):** It's very difficult sitting here listening to him.

**The Speaker:** Member for Lake Nipigon, I don't want to have a debate with you. The question was put. I'd like to hear the answer. Minister.

**Hon Mr Leach:** Again to repeat, we have stated that the trustees didn't have any authority, never had any authority, would never have any authority until such time as the legislation was passed. We agree with that. What we were doing was appointing a body that would be in a position to be prepared to take certain actions when and

if the legislation was passed. If the legislation didn't pass this Legislature, then the trustees would never have had any power.

**Mr Mike Colle (Oakwood):** You said December 17.

**The Speaker:** Member for Oakwood, I'm warning you to come to order now. Thank you. Final supplementary.

**Mr Hampton:** The minister here tries to give a far different explanation than the explanation the government tried to give before a judge, and the judge didn't buy it. He sent your megacity trustees packing, he sent your argument about trying to use the prerogative of kings and queens — imagine that: Here we are in the latter years of the 20th century and this minister goes to court and tries to argue he has the power of a king or queen, the power of royal prerogative.

This is indeed an insult. It is an insult to all the people of Ontario that this government thinks it has the power of a king or queen, the power to institute regulations in the same way that a king or queen acting in the 17th century would do it. That's what the judge said to you. He said you do not have the power of a king or queen, you do not have the royal prerogative any longer, that we live in a democracy, that legislation and regulations must come before the Legislature.

I put it to you again. You have tried now three and four ways to force your will on the people of this province without getting —

**The Speaker:** Thank you, leader. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**Hon Mr Leach:** Again to the member across, at least I had the decency to be in the House when the Lieutenant Governor was sworn in.

What the judge ruled upon today was the OICs that were in question and the OICs that were processed prior to the legislation being approved. I don't think that's an unusual set of circumstances, to process order-in-council appointments prior to legislation being passed. If the courts rule that OICs shouldn't be processed before legislation is passed, that's I think a very precedent-setting ruling. But again to repeat, we have stated that the trustees would not have any jurisdiction whatsoever to take any actions on any issue until such time —

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**Mr Colle:** That's not what you said in the bill; you said December 17.

**The Speaker:** Member for Oakwood. I don't want to name the member for Oakwood, but you're jumping in and it's very difficult to hear the minister. If it happens again, I will name the member for Oakwood. Minister.

**Hon Mr Leach:** Thank you, Mr Speaker. I'll say this directly to the member for Oakwood, because he's obviously been talking and not listening —

**Mr Colle:** You're not listening; you said December 17.

**The Speaker:** This place sometimes can be provoking, but I ask the member for Oakwood, you must come to order, please. I can't hear the minister. I would like to hear the minister. You get the opportunity to put the questions; they deserve the opportunity to answer them. Minister.

**Hon Mr Leach:** I can only repeat that the ruling in question was about the OICs that were passed appointing the trustees.



**Mr Colle:** It was not; it was about responsible government.

**The Speaker:** The member for Oakwood. I name the member for Oakwood, Mr Colle. Will the member for Oakwood please leave the chamber.

*Mr Colle was escorted from the chamber.*

**The Speaker:** New question, leader of the third party.

**Mr Hampton:** Mr Speaker, I want to raise a point of order on this. I simply want you to hear this out because I think it bears on the proceedings in this Legislature. This is what the judge said:

"It seems to me contrary to fundamental principles of responsible government to invoke the royal prerogative without adverting to it. It would also be inimical to those principles if the court assumed that a residual royal prerogative prevails to validate any executive action for which legislative authorization is absent."

Speaker, the judge in this case said that this government cannot do by assuming a royal prerogative what it can't do through the Legislature. The judge has said that basically this government, by its arguments in court, was trying to get around the Legislature. They were trying to say that this government has a royal prerogative that overrides this Legislature. I think that calls into question the whole reason of why we have a Legislature here.

**The Speaker:** The leader of the third party, I think that is exactly what I reserved judgement on earlier with respect to ruling. You may put those in the record — they are now in the record — and I will review them at that time.

New question, leader of the third party.

#### HOSPITAL RESTRUCTURING

**Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River):** Well, Speaker, I'll go to the next piece of chaos this government has created, and it's concerning the chaos that we now see in health care. My question is to the Minister of Health. In September, his hospital restructuring commission walked into Sudbury and ordered two hospitals closed, which amounts to taking \$42 million a year out of Sudbury's health care. I remind the minister that Sudbury is the regional health care centre providing services such as cardiac surgery to the entire northeast of the province. On top of the \$42 million that your hospital commission is taking out of Sudbury, you have also cut the budgets, separate and above from the \$42 million, by \$4.7 million on top of that. It amounts to taking \$46 million out of Sudbury in a year. When will you make the reinvestment decisions for Sudbury? When will you put the money back so that the people of —

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Thank you. Minister of Health.

**Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Health):** The honourable member doesn't have his facts straight. These are not cumulative amounts. We don't have the commission with some sort of a fiscal target and the savings that the Treasurer has asked hospitals to find in getting rid of waste and duplication and excessive administration that was announced a couple of budgets ago. We all know what those savings are and the commission has only indicated that it can find at least that much money, that

we will have a better health care system by finding those savings and reinvesting them in home care and other priority services.

Our reinvestments, the amount of money we've spent putting back into health care, far exceed anything we've seen in savings from the hospitals or any other part of the system right now. It's about three times as much in for any savings we've seen to date. The commission itself is driven by a genuine desire to improve the quality and access of our health care system and to stop wasting money on half-empty buildings, which is the case in Sudbury today.

Over the next three to four years, after the commission has done its work —

**The Speaker:** Thank you, Minister. Supplementary, the member for Algoma.

**Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma):** It's obvious from the minister's response he doesn't know the seriousness of the situation in the northeast.

I have a letter from Dr David Gould of Sault Ste Marie, who is the head of cardiac services for the Sault area hospitals. It's dated February 17 and addressed to the minister's predecessor. I'd ask one of the pages to take it over to the minister.

Dr Gould says that you have a crisis on your hands in the northeast related to the waiting list for cardiac surgery. The waiting list, he says, now stands at 250. He also says, "We have had three patients die as a result of a long waiting list during the past two weeks."

It is true that you have done some reinvestment in cardiac care in Sudbury. It has resulted in one more surgery per week in Sudbury. At the caseload capacity we now have, it will take five years to get through the waiting list. What are you going to do about this? When are you going to put some more money —

**The Speaker:** Thank you, member. Minister of Health. Member for Algoma, please take your seat. Could you please go back to your seat? Thank you so much.

**Hon Mr Wilson:** To tie restructuring to the cardiac care waiting list is simply wrong. The restructuring hasn't occurred yet. In fact, it makes the case for the need to restructure so that we stop spending money on excessive administration and spend it on patients. The previous minister had a meeting on February 12 with the cardiac care network. He has left me with some recommendations that I will be moving on in the very near future to once again expand our capacity to deal with the heart patients in this province. We made a significant investment, as you recognized in your question, to increase the accessibility by 19% over the last year, and we need to do that again. The population is getting older and we're reinvesting dollars into heart patients as soon as we can.

**The Speaker:** Final supplementary, member for Sault Ste Marie.

**Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie):** This is the fourth time I've raised this issue in the House. Today's letter is a shocking account of your government's stewardship over the health care system in Ontario. Dr Gould writes: "Their hearts had deteriorated so severely while waiting for the surgery that by the time the patient was able to get in, their hearts were too weak to sustain them through the operation. They will therefore be listed as surgical



deaths, rather than as deaths while waiting on the waiting list, which is really what they are."

Another patient had to sell his home to buy service in the States.

In November 1995, the waiting list was over 60; November 1996, it was over 230; today, it's over 250. Will you honestly reinvest in health care? Will you lift the quota on heart surgery in Sudbury for all of north-eastern Ontario and free the doctors to do what they do best? They say they can clean this waiting list up if you will only lift the quota. Will you lift the quota?

**Hon Mr Wilson:** Yes, we expect a recommendation very soon from the cardiac care network, which has been looking at this problem. We have a problem in terms of we invested a significant amount of money in heart surgeries over the past few months and yet we expected by this time to see a 19% increase in surgeries. Unfortunately they've only been able to do an 8.5% increase. It's not a lack of money; it's a lack of capacity in the system. We have the experts on an urgent basis trying to figure out what's wrong and as soon as —

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker:** Order. Minister, are you done? No? Minister.

**Hon Mr Wilson:** The experts, the people who do the surgeries, are about to give us some advice on how to improve the system. Just the moment we get that advice we'll put their recommendations in place so that more surgeries can be done.

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## FRENCH-LANGUAGE HOSPITAL SERVICES

**Mr Gilles E. Morin (Carleton East):** I direct this question to the Minister of Health. I wonder if the minister realizes that the Health Services Restructuring Commission has recommended the closing of the only francophone secondary care hospital in Ontario. What kind of signal are we trying to give to the rest of our country?

This recommendation gives me great concern as I am convinced the commission has not taken into account the effect this closure would have on the care and indeed the safety of francophones in Ontario. My question is, in reviewing the recommendations that will be put before you, will the government exercise its responsibility as the protector of minority rights in this province and reject this particular recommendation?

**Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Health):** As I said, the importance of French-language services and providing those services in our health care system is recognized by the commission in the work they've done to date. They go to great pains in their report on many pages to ensure that they are sensitive to the needs of the francophone members of your constituency and of Ottawa-Carleton.

The commission has, in their interim findings, ordered that a plan be put in place to ensure that French-language services continue to be provided in the buildings that will be remaining. Again, those 700 beds have been closed. The administration's all there. The dollars are being wasted on administration.

Your own Ottawa Citizen today has an editorial praising much of the work of the commission and indicating

that the administration was excessive in that area and agreeing, I think, with the commission and the government policy that money has to be spent on patients and not on excessive administration and redundant bricks and mortar.

**Mr Morin:** Let me place points in order. The president of the general hospital has said that if the civic hospital was to join with the general hospital, it would be the end of francophone services, that the francophones would suffer immensely. To me and to all of us it means the beginning of the assimilation of francophones in Ontario. It is the beginning of the end.

Minister, the situation regarding the Montfort Hospital cannot be glossed over. Yesterday was a day of mourning for francophones all over Ontario. This issue is not only of patient care but of the training of francophone health care professionals and the unique role of the Montfort in both of these areas.

Will the minister and the minister for francophone affairs commit today to meet with leaders of the francophone community to hear their concerns about this critically important issue?

**Hon Mr Wilson:** I must say I have no doubt about the sincerity of the member with respect to this issue, but I would remind him that his constituents are currently providing French-language services at the general hospital, which is a fully designated hospital. The Royal rehab centre and St Vincent pavilion are designated as French-language services hospitals. Also, the CHEO — the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario — the civic and the Royal psych hospital all have designated units, French-language services. The commission has gone to great lengths to ensure that not only those current designated services remain in place, but also a comprehensive plan be developed to ensure the continuation of French-language health services to the people in your riding and the people of Ottawa-Carleton who need those services.

## COMMUNITY CARE

**Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre):** I also have a question for the Minister of Health. Last week the member for Nickel Belt asked the temporary Minister of Health why the ministry has, in the words of the deputy minister, "halted all activities of community care access centres pending the development and approval of individual business plans for each CCAC," and as a result the Durham board of their CCAC resigned.

Minister, with only one month before their mandate comes into effect, the CCACs have been ordered to drop everything to fulfil your bureaucratic requirement. Your actions to cut hospital funding by \$1.3 billion mean more and more patients are being released from the hospitals still requiring professional care and the pressure on home care grows daily.

Can you guarantee us here today that on April 1 the CCACs which you created to deliver these growing and vital services will actually be in place, or are we seeing the health ministry's version of the disastrous so-called reform in the family support plan?

**Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Health):** I remind all members that there was great praise for the development of the community care access centres from the service



providers. They're far more preferred than the multi-service agency model the previous government was trying to put in place.

The idea of the business plans is to ensure that we get rid of the excessive administration in home care throughout the province. We have 73 home care and placement coordination offices today. They will be replaced by 42 community care access centres, and we want to see the business plans — and I think it's a reasonable requirement for any business that's using taxpayers' dollars to deliver services — so that we can ensure that they do not spend an excessive amount of money on administration — we're trying to correct the problems of the past — and that every dollar is driven to home nursing services, home care, Meals on Wheels, occupational therapy, physiotherapy. That's why we want to see the business plans, just to ensure that they're not building empires. We're getting rid of the empires of the past and replacing them with streamlined efficient delivery systems.

**Mrs Boyd:** You're full of fine words, Minister, but the reality is that the CCACs are in real difficulty in looking at fulfilling their mandate. You not only have the resignation of the entire Durham regional board, but we have a copy of a letter to the Premier from Terry Shields, the vice-chair of the Hamilton-Wentworth CCAC. Mr Shields makes a connection to the order from your ministry to stop the work of the CCACs with the decision of your government to download long-term-care funding to the municipalities. He suggests that you are bowing to the pressure to transfer delivery decisions to the municipalities.

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There's chaos in long-term care everywhere. On the one hand, your Minister of Community and Social Services says the province will ensure standards in accessibility for long-term-care services. On the other, your Minister of Finance said in the Windsor Star in January that the decisions will be left to the municipalities. Now you've stopped the whole process of implementation just because of a bureaucratic requirement.

Will you deny that you're considering reversing a whole year's work on long-term-care reform —

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Thank you, member. Minister of Health.

**Mrs Boyd:** — and will you deny that the ministry is currently considering options that would cancel the implementation?

**The Speaker:** Member for London Centre. Minister of Health.

**Hon Mr Wilson:** Again, when you're using taxpayers' dollars, it's a very reasonable request to ask for a business plan. Many of the community care access centre boards had already developed business plans, so it didn't apply to all of them, just those that had not submitted anything to the ministry.

Every dollar has to be spent on services, not excessive administration. An example is that in some communities it may be appropriate to have the offices for the community care access centres in the empty parts of the hospital buildings or in health care facility buildings where we have physical space.

**Mrs Boyd:** Why didn't you think of that six months ago?

**Hon Mr Wilson:** We did think of that, I say to the honourable member. It's just that some of the boards didn't quite get the message so we're asking them to submit a business plan and to make absolute best use of the taxpayers' dollars to ensure that every dollar is available for care and not administration.

**Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre):** Why did you wait till now?

**The Speaker:** The members for London Centre and Hamilton Centre, I want you to come to order, please. Thank you.

## EDUCATION LEGISLATION

**Mrs Helen Johns (Huron):** My question is to the Minister of Education. I'm quite concerned about an event that I read in my local paper the other day. I was reading that the Ontario Public School Boards' Association is thinking about organizing a constitutional legal challenge against the ministry as a result of Bill 104. The public school board is asking that the public boards in Ontario give at least 60 cents per student to them to be able to fight this constitutional challenge.

As everyone in this House knows, I represent some of the poorest boards in the province, and as I read the motion from my board, it suggested that we would allow up to 75 cents per student to be given to this constitutional challenge. That translates to \$7,500 that will be put into the pockets of lawyers as opposed to being put into textbooks, computers and important classroom events. Minister, will you please tell us how Bill 104 will help stop this kind of abuse of taxpayers' dollars?

**Hon John Snobelen (Minister of Education and Training):** I want to thank the member for Huron for the question. Let's be very clear about this. There is no indication whatsoever that there is anything in Bill 104 that is unconstitutional, right off the start, and in all the public hearings there has been absolutely no indication of that. In fact Bill 104 is about reducing waste and duplication —

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Order.

**Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre):** Bullshit.

**The Speaker:** I take it you want to withdraw that. If you'd stand and withdraw that, please. Thank you. Minister of Education.

**Hon Mr Snobelen:** Bill 104 is about reducing waste and duplication, and reducing the number of politicians in our education system from about 1,900 to 700. In addition to Bill 104, this government has announced its intention to lift the burden of financing education from the local boards and from the property taxpayer.

We will do this in answer to any number of studies on our funding system and we'll do it, oddly enough, in answer to the requests of the Ontario Public School Boards' Association, whose cries for more investment from the province have fallen on deaf ears for over a decade. We will do this to ensure that every student in the province has an opportunity to a high quality of education and we'll do it without violating any constitutional rights.



**Mrs Johns:** Minister, when I meet with my trustees, they tell me that they are putting every cent that they possibly can back into the classroom, that they are spending between 1% and 3% of their budget in administration. Now I discover that they're spending \$7,500 of the taxpayers' money in Huron county to be wasted on this legal challenge. Is there anything we can do to change this situation or to improve it?

**Hon Mr Snobelen:** I can tell the member for Huron that the Ontario Public School Boards' Association or her local trustees do not need to file a lawsuit to improve student achievement. They need to assist us in ensuring that we have a funding model that meets the needs —

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker:** Member for Sudbury, member for Fort William, please come to order. Minister of Education.

**Hon Mr Snobelen:** They need to assist us in making sure that our funding model meets the needs of every individual student. They need to help us reduce waste and overlap and duplication and bureaucracy in education. They need to help us raise the standards of students' performance right across the province with common curriculum and real testing.

Spending \$800,000 on a lawsuit, enough for textbooks for a thousand classrooms or 1,600 individual musical instruments, won't help students. It will be a vain attempt to protect a bloated bureaucracy and to protect the jobs, pay and perks of a few trustees.

**Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury):** What a hypocrite.

**The Speaker:** That's out of order. The member for Sudbury, will you withdraw.

**Mr Bartolucci:** Withdrawn.

**Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Did I hear the minister say how much the TV ads are costing, with the Premier —

**The Speaker:** That's not a point of order. New question.

## HOSPITAL RESTRUCTURING

**Mr Gerard Kennedy (York South):** My question is for the Minister of Health. I really would encourage you to talk straight to us, not to follow the example of the minister just before you. Tell us clearly how your cuts — your cuts are what are hurting patients today. You stand in your place and say restructuring hasn't taken place yet. Restructuring is going to hurt people tomorrow. Your cuts, the ones signed for on your desk, are what is hurting people today.

The Jim Wilson prescription — nobody else's — is made up of slide-rules and formulas. You send your people into towns, your ministry staff and the restructuring people, and you're telling people now how long to keep people in hospital. You have rules about that called the average length of stay, and you're forcing hospitals to adopt these phoney rules.

Yesterday, Minister, we exposed the fact that you're aware that all the models your ministry can run still show you're hurting patients to the tune of \$300 million worth of hurt this year, cuts you can't get unless you take them out of patients' care.

Minister, will you not talk directly today to the people of Ottawa, to the people of Pembroke, to the people of Brockville and admit that you're experimenting on health care —

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Thank you, member for York South.

**Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Health):** The honourable member for York South should know full well that the Minister of Health as a layperson does not make up these benchmarks. The commission is made up of experts in the health care field who have put together a plan for health care and for hospital restructuring so that at the end of the day we'll have modern hospitals with new technologies, more nurses in the buildings that remain, more services, and greater access for the people of Ontario.

In the three areas he mentions, we don't have a waiting list for home care in Ottawa today or home nursing services, nor in Windsor, nor in Thunder Bay. We've made a tremendous investment of some \$170 million in those community-based care programs and we're going to make more investments.

I thought I proved to the honourable member yesterday that his figures were in error and that the government has reinvested much more new money into health care than anything we've been seeing in savings to date.

**Mr Kennedy:** That's not what your joint committee with the hospitals told you and it's not what an expert whom the hospital restructuring committee invited to take a look at the strategies you're using told you. This expert says that the device you're using, that you're endorsing for the restructuring commission and for the ministry, is a "statistical anomaly unsuitable as a meaningful benchmark" for establishing the number of beds. This average length of stay that you're using, making all the hospitals fit this phoney slide-rule that your so-called experts are using, is flawed rather than merely aggressive.

You know this: Of the recent cuts, hundreds of nurses are out of work and hundreds of beds are being closed simply because of the use of this formula. It says here that the flaws in your formula mean it's "...not sound or achievable, the inevitable consequence of persisting with this will be reduced health...and reduced accessibility."

Minister, will you speak now to all the people affected by the cuts and will you withdraw the use —

**The Speaker:** Thank you. Minister of Health?

**Hon Mr Wilson:** In working with the Ontario Hospital Association and with the hospitals throughout the province, the government is concerned about the third year of the savings, and we've indicated that; and that we want to listen very, very carefully. Hospitals have done an absolutely tremendous job in year one, and we're just beginning year two, the early stages of year two. They've done a tremendous job, and throughout the system they are serving you won't find a hospital today that isn't serving more patients, maintaining the quality; they have quality councils that measure this.

Where we have problems in hospitals today, those problems need to be addressed. We need to learn from those individual cases and we need to make reinvestments to continue to improve the system. The commission has as its guiding principles improving quality to service and



improving access to service. That's what it's doing, and it is looking at communities to ensure —

**The Speaker:** Thank you, Minister.

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### FIRE SAFETY

**Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold):** I have a question of the Solicitor General. Firefighters in this province know that the Premier broke his promise to consult with them. They know that Bill 84 is going to reduce public safety and put at risk fire protection here in Ontario. Among other things, it opens the doors wide to the privatization of firefighting services.

Just a few weeks ago senior officials from Rural/Metro, a US-based private firefighting service, was up in Waterloo talking to their CEO and presented a plan for the privatization of their fire department, their firefighting services. That's the same US company that you know has already started to take over ambulances here in the province.

One of the things they've proposed to reduce costs, because they're profit-driven, is a 66-hour workweek, and reducing the number of staff that would be available on emergency vehicles. Private firefighting services like Rural/Metro and many others are motivated by profit. Can you explain how privatization of firefighting is going to enhance public safety here in Ontario?

**Hon Robert W. Runciman (Solicitor General and Minister of Correctional Services):** I'd like the member opposite to explain to me how the bill encourages privatization. There's nothing in terms of the legislation that encourages or discourages privatization, but that is no change from the current status. Nothing has changed in that respect, and municipalities in this province have not privatized. That option has been available in the past. Nothing in Bill 84 encourages any change with respect to the approach to the operation of fire services in this province.

**Mr Kormos:** The firefighters know better. I know better. This minister ought to know better. He redefines "employer" to include private operations and persons in addition to mere municipalities.

Rural/Metro is peddling its wares up here for a very clear reason, because they know that this government is writing a blank cheque for the privatization of public services like firefighting.

Let me tell you how Rural/Metro has done in the United States. Down in the Phoenix area it took them over 20 minutes to arrive at one house fire. The house burned to the ground. Rural/Metro then billed the home owner over \$13,000 for equipment and services that never arrived at the site. Another Phoenix-area resident stood there and watched firefighters standing around watching her house burn. They only had three and a half minutes of water in their pumper truck. Another truck broke down and had to be towed away from the scene. That home owner was billed too. That's how private operators have been operating in the United States and that's how they propose to operate here. Why are you opening the door for private firefighting services in Ontario? There's just no justification for it.

**Hon Mr Runciman:** I didn't get an answer with respect to how we're encouraging privatization or any change in terms of the current status. The member is engaging in real scare tactics here with respect to using some kind of a horrid example in the United States —

**Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River):** How much money did they give the PC Party, eh Bob?

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Order. Members come to order, please.

**Mr Len Wood (Cochrane North):** — must have been in the legislation —

**The Speaker:** Member for Cochrane North, come to order.

*Interjection.*

**The Speaker:** Member for Sault Ste Marie, come to order.

**Mr Gilles Pouliot (Lake Nipigon):** They're scared, Mr Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Member for Lake Nipigon, please come to order.

**Hon Mr Runciman:** Mr Speaker, if they're genuinely concerned, I'm about to allay their concerns. All they have to do is listen. Bill 84 provides greater protection to communities across this province than is currently the case. Under the current legislation there's no requirement to even provide a fire service, that's the reality, but the new legislation ensures oversight through the fire marshal's office and through the office of the Solicitor General.

If indeed either office feels that a community's public safety is in jeopardy, they have the right to intervene and make requirements for that municipality to provide an adequate level of fire service. If the municipality declines to follow those recommendations, the cabinet and the government of the day have the right to intervene and pass regulations requiring them to do so.

### WOMEN'S ISSUES

**Mr John Hastings (Etobicoke-Rexdale):** My question is directed to the minister responsible for women's issues. Given the positive economic initiatives this government is undertaking in helping women to achieve true economic independence, I would like to ask the minister how this government is specifically dealing with this question —

*Interjections.*

**Mr Hastings:** — unlike the opposition, who aren't concerned at all.

**Hon Dianne Cunningham (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, minister responsible for women's issues):** In response to the member for Etobicoke-Rexdale, there are probably three pieces of information we should be taking back to our constituents.

First of all, our school systems are to be congratulated. Young girls and women are choosing courses that will advance their careers in math and science in order to balance their education so they can get the good jobs.

Second, sexual harassment is still prevalent in our society. In our schools right now, we should also say congratulations to our teachers for using *The Joke's Over*,



which is an extremely good program to eliminate, we hope, sexual harassment in society. We have to start with young people, the younger the better.

The last piece I'd like to talk about is the work of the Minister of Education as he proceeds on apprenticeship reform. It's important to know that only 10% of apprenticeship positions are filled by girls and women. It's important to improve upon that, and we'll be doing that with the Minister of Education in the very near future.

**Mr Hastings:** Thank you for that excellent response. I'd like to focus also on how your ministry is trying to achieve specific initiatives contained in the last budget. Given that the rate of economic enterprises and growth by women in this province is at three times the ratio that men create businesses, I'd like to know how those particular budgetary measures are helping women to achieve economic independence today, unlike the opposition, who aren't interested at all.

**Hon Mrs Cunningham:** I thank the member for the question. I think it's important to recognize that women are creating small businesses at three times the rate of men. They are the largest creators of small businesses in Canada, so it's extremely important that they were recognized in the last budget in three regards.

First of all, the employer health tax, which was started by the Liberal government some six years ago: It's a huge, important piece of information and an incentive to creators of small business that we take off that employer health tax for businesses that have a payroll of less than \$400,000.

The small business investment credit, which the banks are working with: Many women have come forward and said they have probably done better because of that working relationship with their bank.

We've cut the red tape and the overregulation, which wasn't important to either of the two former governments, which increased it to such an extent that people didn't even want to do business in the province of Ontario.

Finally, the tax rate cut will help people who earn less than \$20,000 —

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** New question; the member for Prescott and Russell.

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## FRENCH-LANGUAGE HOSPITAL SERVICES

**Mr Jean-Marc Lalonde (Prescott and Russell):** My question is to the minister responsible for francophone affairs. Minister, just a few minutes ago the Minister of Health said francophone services exist at the Ottawa General Hospital. I'd just like to know how you would feel if you were to lose a brother because of a lack of francophone services at the general hospital. What would happen if in Quebec they decided to close the only English hospital that exists in the province?

At the present time, the minister says French services are there and will remain there. Let me tell you, Minister, at the present time francophone services do not exist at the Ottawa General Hospital. My brother was admitted at the Montfort Hospital and transferred to the general hospital. The file followed him in the ambulance. But 16

hours after he was admitted to the general hospital, the nurse at the general told me when I got there, "I'm sorry, Mr Lalonde" — lucky he's got a strong heart; all the time he had a heart attack — "but I have not received the record yet." Because the record was written in French by the physician at the Montfort Hospital, 16 hours later, the records were not at the general hospital.

Minister, would you commit today or would you tell the Minister of Health that the Montfort Hospital will remain open for the francophone people of —

**Hon Noble Villeneuve (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, minister responsible for francophone affairs):** Under Bill 8, the general hospital is designated in every area to deliver French-language services. I had the opportunity last summer to be in the general hospital because I lost a cousin there, and I will tell you that French is spoken in every corridor and I had no problem speaking French anywhere. So when you say that the general hospital does not operate in French, you are absolutely wrong. I will tell you that CHEO is designated in certain areas for the delivery of French-language services, as is the civic hospital.

The restructuring committee has recommended —

**Mrs Elinor Caplan (Oriole):** You cannot close the Montfort.

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Order, the member for Oriole. Minister of francophone affairs.

**Hon Mr Villeneuve:** I simply want to tell the public, the friends of Montfort, that indeed they have 30 days to express their concerns —

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker:** Minister.

**Hon Mr Villeneuve:** These recommendations were made very much with the direction to support francophone services in the community of Ottawa, and I can assure you that francophone services will remain.

## EDUCATION LEGISLATION

**Mrs Lyn McLeod (Fort William):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I appreciate that you've reserved a ruling on the earlier point of order related to the court decision on Bill 103. I would like you to consider, as you make a ruling on that issue, a related issue on Bill 104, the education bill, the Fewer School Boards Act.

You will be aware that there is a provision in that legislation for retroactivity and that the commissioners who are to essentially take over the powers of duly elected boards have been appointed, and although they are nominally serving as consultants to the ministry, they are in fact carrying out their responsibilities. But even more significant perhaps than that is that the legally elected, mandated boards' powers have been retroactively suspended as of January 14. I believe there's a clear relationship between that ruling and the court order on Bill 103. I'll wait until you've consulted, if you like. At your pleasure, Mr Speaker.

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Yes, it was confirmed in my mind. The ruling I made on Bill 103 at the time — it was brought forward by the member for Dovercourt and I suggested it was a legal issue at this point in time. Now it's gone out. I will say to you about



Bill 104 the same thing I said about Bill 103. It's a legal issue at this time. It hasn't been satisfied. There has not been a legal decision rendered, as I understand, on Bill 104. I understand what you're going to say. You're going to say it has great relationship to Bill 103, but the fact —

*Interjection.*

**The Speaker:** Okay, continue.

**Mrs McLeod:** Thank you for giving me the opportunity to say something that you might be prepared to consider, Mr Speaker. It gives me a bit of head start on the next leg.

My concern, and it's in a response the Minister of Education made to a question earlier today, is that people are going to have to take forward almost the same challenge under Bill 104 as has just been adjudicated in court on Bill 103. I know that my colleague raised an issue of contempt. I want to place a slightly different point of order.

It would be my understanding, based on a considerable amount of work that was done a year ago as to the role of the Speaker and the responsibility of the Speaker, that if you believe that something which is part of legislation that has been brought forward is not in order — and I would submit to you that given the ruling on Bill 103 that retroactivity is not in order in legislation, it would not be in order in Bill 104 — as Speaker you would be able to direct the government, since apparently it would rather trustees spent money going to court to get another virtually identical situation resolved in legal terms, you as Speaker could prevent that happening by looking at the inappropriateness of that part of that legislation.

**The Speaker:** The member for Fort William, I appreciate the point of order you raise. I feel that with respect to Bill 104 my original ruling will probably be the same as on Bill 103. It's incumbent that these get before the courts and be heard before the courts and decisions rendered at that stage, and that seems to be the most appropriate process to use today.

What I will say is that I'm taking into consideration all the points of privilege and order with respect to Bill 103. I'm not being dismissive, but I honestly can't see a point of privilege or a contempt that you bring forward with respect to Bill 104.

**Mrs McLeod:** If I may, I'm not bringing forward either privilege or contempt; I'm bringing forward a point of order. I do this quite seriously. I don't really believe that we should be in a situation in the province of Ontario where private citizens, elected or otherwise, must continually go to court in order to have their government do something which has clearly been shown to be inappropriate and undemocratic.

Again, I'll wait while you consult.

**The Speaker:** I've heard from the Clerk, and he's saying basically the same thing I'm saying. It's not up to the Speaker to decide the constitutionality of a bill; it's up to the courts to decide that.

**Mrs McLeod:** Mr Speaker, if I may plead my point, I believe we have a very serious issue before this Legislature. We have had an individual representing an elected body go to court and today obtain a decision that legislation being presented in this place is not legally appropriate.

I would submit to you that that action sets a precedent for what is appropriate legislation in this place. Surely you're not saying that as Speaker you cannot look at that precedent now determined in the court, according to your previous direction, a precedent that is clearly applicable to a second piece of legislation before the House, surely you're not saying that you have no power to see the parallel and that yet more citizens have to go to court, make that expenditure, force the government to try and counter it, when you could resolve that by seeing the very clear relationship between the two.

**The Speaker:** The member for Fort William, that is what I'm saying. I know it's difficult to accept, but that is what I'm saying, simply because the Speaker can't rule on the legality or constitutional legality of legislation, regardless of how closely you see them or how parallel they are. What I'm saying to you is, I can't make that adjudication. As Speaker, I would be in a very dangerous situation if I were to begin ruling on the legalities of bills that came into this place.

**Mrs McLeod:** Mr Speaker, with respect, I believe that you have been given bad advice. I believe we are in a situation which has not had precedent within this Legislature. We have a citizen having a court decision that legislation is inappropriate in being presented to this House, and I believe you have a responsibility to deal with what is not precedented and to at least review the concern.

**The Speaker:** I'm prepared to do that. If that's what you're asking me to do, to review your concerns, review what you put on the record and give it some consideration, I am prepared to do that. I want you to understand I come at this with some degree of predisposition, but I will give you my undertaking to review it.

**Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: With all due respect —

**The Speaker:** Is this the same point of order? It is?

**Mr Wildman:** With all due respect, Speaker, to your high office, I understand the difficulty you find yourself in. It would be most helpful to all of us in this assembly, and particularly to you, if the government House leader and the Minister of Education and Training were listening carefully to this discussion and themselves would find parallels and take action rather than waiting for members of the public to have to go to court. Surely it's incumbent upon the government to act, with regard to Bill 104, in compliance with the court ruling on Bill 103 rather than waiting for the public to take them to court.

1510

**The Speaker:** The member for Algoma, it's not a point of order. I appreciate your comments, but it is not a point of order.

**Hon John Snobelen (Minister of Education and Training):** On a point of privilege, Mr Speaker: If the member for Fort William or the member for Algoma wishes to raise a question on Bill 104, the proper time for that is question period. This minister will be more than happy to respond to it.

In response to the comments from the member for Algoma, we will of course review Bill 104 in relationship to any court rulings —

*Interjections.*



**The Speaker:** It's a point of privilege. With a great deal of respect, the members opposite do listen to your points of privilege and order. I ask the same for them. Minister.

**Hon Mr Snobelen:** We obviously will review Bill 104 in light of any rulings from courts and we will make known to the members of the opposition and the third party the results of those reviews. We'll be doing that in good course.

### COURT RULING

**Mrs Elinor Caplan (Oriole):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'm referring to the court order as it relates to Bill 103, which is presently before the Legislature. The Speaker ruled and we now have a court order which says that the actions of the government to date, as they relate to Bill 103 and some of the provisions within that bill for the appointment of trustees, are, and I would give you the language on page 13: "I conclude that the orders in council of December 18, 1996, were made without authority and are of no legal effect. The appointments are therefore void. The appointees' actions have no legal effect until they are appointed pursuant to a statute in force."

I believe this affects the relevance of this place and I ask, in light of this court decision, if a motion of contempt would be in order because of the actions taken by the government of approving those appointments contrary to the legal action of the court, whether it is up to you to make a ruling that the government acted in contempt of this Legislature. Clearly they acted illegally.

Also, questions were raised in this House. They assured us they were doing nothing wrong. The courts have now said they —

**The Speaker:** The member for Oriole —

**Mrs Caplan:** Can I have your ruling?

**The Speaker:** I'm going to give that ruling because the member for Oakwood and the member for Dovercourt asked for that ruling to be made.

### ORDER AND DECORUM IN CHAMBER

**Mrs Margaret Marland (Mississauga South):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: My point of order is with regard to the standing orders that deal with interjections.

This afternoon in the House I think we witnessed an individual member really stepping over the line with interjections. I quite understand the opposing opinions in this chamber and I respect that, as I know you do, Mr Speaker. We've all been on both sides of this chamber. This afternoon my colleague the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs responsible for francophone affairs was explaining that he understood how a particular hospital operated because he personally experienced that last year during the death of his cousin. At this time, without relenting, the member for Windsor-Sandwich continued very loudly, as she does throughout all the question periods and seems to be able to get away with it, to heckle my colleague the minister in spite of the fact that he was explaining —

**Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor-Sandwich):** Just tell the truth, Margaret.

**Mrs Marland:** You see what I mean? — that he had gone through the death of his cousin.

This member, in my opinion, not only steps over the line with her very loud interjections to the point where earlier this afternoon, if you review the tape, you will hear that you had to shout to be heard over some of those members, but particularly the one for Windsor-Sandwich.

**The Speaker:** The member for Mississauga South, let's be very clear. I think with some degree the opposition tends to, I understand, heckle more than the government side. I think you do understand that, having spent some time in the opposition benches yourself with others.

I've got to say to the member for Mississauga South, when I sit here there's heckling that happens on this side as well. In fact at one point during the day one of your ministers was heckling, I would say, on a fairly regular basis. I didn't call that minister to order at the time either, because I understand that a number of people were heckling.

I understand that you may have problems with some of the members opposite in the way they heckle and what they're saying and so forth, and I know that during that point of time the minister for francophone affairs was offering what I would consider to be a very personal point of view on his life a year or so ago that was probably very emotional for him.

But, to the member for Mississauga South, a lot of people heckle in here and I do my very best to maintain order. With the greatest respect to the member for Mississauga South, it matters not who the person is that's heckling; it doesn't matter to me who they are or where they sit. I will call them to order if they've gone over the edge, which I did a number of times today, and I asked a member to leave.

As far as I'm concerned, the member for Windsor-Sandwich does have a very loud voice. Some of us in the past have been known to have a loud voice as well. I myself had a very loud voice in opposition and never got pitched out of the place. So I'm doing my very best to try and maintain order and decorum, and if you're trying to suggest to me that I'm not throwing the member for Windsor-Sandwich out because I don't particularly mind her heckles or I like her heckles or whatever, you're wrong.

It would be a much simpler job for me if nobody heckled in this place, but this is a fact of life. I'm doing the very best I can, and with all due respect, if the government side would sit quietly by the whole day and the opposition were the only people who were heckling back and forth, then maybe I would come down harder. But there are times when they are provoked and maybe there are times when they're provoking the government side.

I appreciate your point of order, but I just find no basis in fact for it.

### PETITIONS

#### MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

**Mr Gerard Kennedy (York South):** I have a petition which reads:

"Stop Megacity Madness: Citizens Have Democratic Right to Be Heard."



"To the Legislature of Ontario:

"Whereas 'bigger government is not better' and the Mike Harris government has no right to dictate a megacity upon the citizens of Metro Toronto; and

"Whereas the megacity is being imposed on 2.3 million citizens in Metro Toronto without giving the people a voice in the future of their cities and their neighbourhoods; and

"Whereas a megacity could lead to mega property tax increases, mega user fees and mega cuts in services; and

"Whereas the Tories never proposed abolishing local government in favour of bigger government during the election campaign;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario as follows:

"To give the 2.3 million people in Metro Toronto a say in the future of their cities and stop the imposition of a megacity."

To this petition I affix my signature and it has been signed by dozens of people from the riding of York South.

**Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale):** My petition is signed by hundreds of people. It reads:

"Citizens Have the Democratic Right to Be Heard on Megacity.

"To the Legislature of Ontario:

"Whereas 'bigger government is not better' and the Mike Harris government has no right to dictate a megacity upon the citizens of Metro Toronto; and

"Whereas the megacity is being imposed on 2.3 million citizens in Metro Toronto without giving people a voice in the future of their cities and neighbourhoods; and

"Whereas Bill 103 puts municipal councils in Metro Toronto under trusteeship, ending local democracy; and

"Whereas a megacity could lead to mega property tax increases, mega user fees and mega cuts in services; and

"Whereas the Tories never proposed abolishing local government in favour of bigger government during the election campaign" — in fact they pledged to do the opposite —

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario as follows:

"To give the 2.3 million people in Metro Toronto a say in the future of their cities and stop the imposition of a megacity and stop the undemocratic takeover of our cities by non-elected trustees."

I affix my name to this petition.

1520

#### PRINCE EDWARD HEIGHTS

**Mr Gary Fox (Prince Edward-Lennox-South Hastings):** "We, the family, friends and staff of Prince Edward Heights, are gravely disappointed with Minister Ecker's decision not to attend the tour and to speak publicly at the forum being held in Picton, Ontario.

"The closure of Prince Edward Heights will be not only a loss for the clients but for the community as well. The payroll alone for Prince Edward Heights is over \$16 million. That will be taken directly out of the economy.

"We also feel that the government policy to close all institutions is a blanket policy that does not meet the needs of all individuals with developmental limitations.

We want these individuals to have a choice of where they live.

"Once again, we state that Prince Edward Heights has supported over 700 successful community placements and we are very proud of that fact. We feel that at the present time not everyone who resides at Prince Edward Heights would benefit from a community placement and in fact would lose many of the rights and freedoms they now enjoy. They would also lose family and qualified staff due to the lack of any kind of standards being enforced in community agencies. Above all else, these people will lose their homes, friendship and relationships developed over a 25-year period.

"We urge you to come to Picton to meet these people and to see their homes and services and supports that are provided. There are many concerns and questions that we have that can only be answered by you. We would strongly encourage you to arrange a date and time for this."

I sign my name to this petition.

#### BIBLIOTHÈQUES PUBLIQUES

**M. Jean-Marc Lalonde (Prescott et Russell) :** J'ai une pétition ici qui me parvient des Amis de la bibliothèque de Hawkesbury, Lefaivre, L'Original et Vankleek Hill aux membres de l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario.

«Étant donné que nous croyons fermement que la responsabilité provinciale dans les bibliothèques publiques en Ontario est un droit fondamental de tous les Ontariens et toutes les Ontariennes ;

«Nous, les soussignés, demandons aux membres de l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario de sauvegarder la responsabilité provinciale dans les bibliothèques publiques en s'assurant de maintenir ce qui suit :

«(1) Les subventions provinciales qui permettent d'assurer à tous les Ontariens et à toutes les Ontariennes un accès équitable aux documents et aux services de bibliothèque publique ;

«(2) La coordination des programmes de partage des ressources tels que le système de prêt entre bibliothèques et l'accès au réseau Internet ;

«(3) Une politique permettant d'assurer l'existence du réseau des bibliothèques publiques de l'Ontario ;

«(4) L'aide directe de la part du gouvernement provincial au niveau du service, par exemple par l'entremise du Service des bibliothèques de l'Ontario-Sud et du Service des bibliothèques de l'Ontario du Nord ;

«(5) Une loi maintenant l'autonomie des conseils d'administration des bibliothèques publiques en Ontario.»

#### EDUCATION LEGISLATION

**Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale):** I have another petition, mostly from my riding but from all over the city of Toronto. It reads:

"Petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Mike Harris and John Snobelen promised to give Ontario students a better education and to make the education system more accountable; and

"Whereas there is nothing in Bill 104 or in prior bills to indicate how or whether the education of Ontario's students will improve; and



"Whereas Bill 104 severely undermines an important level of local, democratically elected representation; and

"Whereas Bill 104 allows the government to appoint an Education Improvement Commission with sweeping powers that reports to the Minister of Education; and

"Whereas the fact that Bill 104 states that the decisions of the Education Improvement Commission are 'final and shall not be reviewed or questioned by a court' indicates a severe lack of regard for democracy; and

"Whereas the radical change to the structure of the education system called for in Bill 104 and the undue speed with which the government is attempting to pass and implement Bill 104 indicate a severe lack of regard for democracy; and

"Whereas democracy is the system that makes government accountable,

"We, the undersigned, demand that the government withdraw Bill 104."

As I agree with this, I will affix my name to this petition.

HOSPITAL FINANCING

**Mr Dave Boushy (Sarnia):** I have a petition in regard to base funding as it relates to hospital restructuring in my community. It's signed by about 120 people. It reads, very briefly:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontarians are gravely concerned with the historic \$1.3-billion cuts to base funding of hospitals; and

"Whereas Ontarians feel that health services are suffering; and

"Whereas the government is reducing hospital funding and not reinvesting millions of dollars into the communities that they are being taken away from;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to call on the Conservative government to stop the cuts to base funding for hospitals across Ontario and to ensure that community services are in place before the removal of hospital services. The Conservative government must fund hospitals with a funding formula that reflects demographic and regional needs. The Conservative government must ensure that health services are available, including emergency and urgent care, to all Ontarians."

I'll be happy to affix my signature to this petition.

FIRE SAFETY

**Mr John C. Cleary (Cornwall):** "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Firefighters need speed, experience and teamwork to save lives. I oppose any legislation that could undermine the work of my local firefighters and jeopardize fire safety in my community. Please listen to professional firefighters and amend Bill 84 to eliminate the threat to fire safety."

I've also signed this petition.

MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

**Mr Len Wood (Cochrane North):** "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the government of Ontario is proposing to restructure completely the provincial-municipal relationship without having consulted the people of Ontario; and

"This restructuring proposes to download to municipalities the cost of transportation and such critical social services as welfare and long-term care for the elderly and the chronically ill; and

"Removes school boards' ability to tax, eliminating any effective local control over schools and school programs; and

"The government's actions fail to guarantee existing levels of funding and failure to recognize the unequal ability of local communities to bear the cost of these new burdens, thus producing inequitable access to essential services; and

"Whereas the government's lack of meaningful public consultation and disregard for public response pose a serious threat to democracy;

We, the undersigned residents of Ontario, because we care about the quality of life in our province and the wellbeing of our children, neighbours and communities, register a vote of non-confidence to the government in the province of Ontario."

I affix my signature to this petition.

**Mr John L. Parker (York East):** I have a petition here signed by a number of residents of East York. It reads as follows:

"We, the undersigned residents of East York, are in favour of the borough of East York remaining as a separate municipality."

FIRE SAFETY

**Mrs Elinor Caplan (Oriole):** I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Firefighters need speed, experience and teamwork to save lives. I oppose any legislation that could undermine the work of my local firefighters and jeopardize fire safety in my community. Please listen to professional firefighters and amend Bill 84 to eliminate the threat to fire safety."

I support this petition and hope the government will withdraw Bill 84.

**Mr Len Wood (Cochrane North):** I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Speed, experience and teamwork save lives.

"Firefighters need speed, experience and teamwork to save lives. I oppose any legislation that could undermine the work of my local firefighters and jeopardize fire safety in my community. Please listen to professional firefighters and amend Bill 84 to eliminate the threat to fire safety."

I affix my signature to this petition as well.

MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

**Mr Dan Newman (Scarborough Centre):** I have a petition.

"Whereas the city of Scarborough is requiring individuals who want to participate in the mail-in referendum to provide their name, address and signature on the ballot; and



"Whereas this requirement is blatantly undemocratic and threatens the legitimacy of the democratic process; and

"Whereas the city of Scarborough makes no mention as to whether or not it will accept ballots from residents who wish to vote in confidence; and

"Whereas the question on the ballot itself is slanted towards the position of the city and cannot be viewed as a neutral question; and

"Whereas this uncertainty and undemocratic procedure makes the entire process a great misuse of taxpayers' dollars and tarnishes any results that will come out of the vote;

"Therefore be it resolved that we, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario to (1) speak out against this undemocratic vote, (2) disregard the results of the vote, and (3) continue with the proposed unification of the municipalities into one unified city of Toronto."

### FIRE SAFETY

**Mr Tony Ruprecht (Parkdale):** I have a petition against Bill 84 and in favour of firefighters who, as you know, are the best in the world. It reads as follows:

"Firefighters need speed, experience and teamwork to save lives. I oppose any legislation that could undermine the work of my local firefighters and jeopardize fire safety in my community. Please listen to professional firefighters and amend Bill 84 to eliminate the threat to fire safety."

I have affixed my signature to this document.  
1530

**Ms Shelley Martel (Sudbury East):** I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly which reads as follows:

"Firefighters need speed, experience and teamwork to save lives. I oppose any legislation that could undermine the work of my local firefighters and jeopardize fire safety in my community. Please listen to professional firefighters and amend Bill 84 to eliminate the threat to fire safety."

This is signed by 15 residents of Collingwood. I agree with the petitioners and I have signed the petition as well.

### HOSPITAL RESTRUCTURING

**Mr Tim Hudak (Niagara South):** I went to General Vanier public school in Fort Erie, and the students tell me they'd like to see Douglas Memorial Hospital stay open.

"We need the hospital facilities right in Fort Erie because of the great care that staff members give to the people of Fort Erie at the emergency centre and other departments of the hospital.

"Just think, if you close the hospital, people in Fort Erie that hurt themselves badly, people in need of medical care and even matters of life and death, would have to drive all the way to Niagara Falls, Welland or St Catharines, plus the doctors would more likely move elsewhere because they'd have no hospital for their patients."

It's signed by it looks like about 100 grades 6 and 8 students at General Vanier, like Heather Porteous, Ashley Sumbler, and I'll sign my signature with these student.

**Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor-Sandwich):** I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario which I'll try to read in the most clear and loud voice possible.

"Whereas Windsor-Essex county was the first community to undergo hospital restructuring; and

"Whereas the community supported the recommendations of the Win-Win report based on a funding model that included the expansion of community-based care; and

"Whereas recent reports estimate that Windsor-Essex hospital expenditure is underfunded by approximately \$122 per person; and

"Whereas this represents the lowest funding per capita for hospital services of any community in Ontario with a population of over 200,000;

"Whereas hospitals across the province have been forced to further reduce expenditures 18%; and

"Whereas these cuts have forced hospitals to eliminate emergency services in the west end of Windsor and other desperately needed services; and

"Whereas the minister acknowledged that additional funding was necessary in high-growth areas;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to call on the Minister of Health to provide appropriate levels of health care funding to hospitals in Windsor-Essex which would allow Windsor Regional Hospital to provide urgent care services for the west-end community and to restore equitable health care funding across Windsor and Essex county."

I affix my signature.

### ORDERS OF THE DAY

#### HOUSE SITTINGS

Resuming the adjourned debate on the House calendar motion.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin):** The member for Dovercourt.

**Mr Tony Silipo (Dovercourt):** Yesterday the House agreed to allow Mr Wildman and me to split the opening time. I would like to ask, Speaker — I believe there is agreement and I checked with the respective whips or House leaders — if I could have unanimous consent to further split the time that's left in the opening 90 minutes with my colleague from Hamilton Centre.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Agreed? Agreed.

**Mr Silipo:** I appreciate the members agreeing to that request. It will allow me not to use up too much of my voice, as I've just been recovering from a bit of the flu and a virus, and allow my colleague from Hamilton Centre to get on the record. I don't say that to try to gain any sympathy, I want to assure you. I don't know how my voice sounds. It doesn't sound like it's all there from my end, but I would not want for a second, if my voice is not carrying with its usual fervour, particularly people across to take it as any sign of relenting, on my part and on our part, our opposition to what this government is doing and certainly our opposition to what this motion in front of us does.

We know that what this motion does is it orders the schedule, in effect, for the Parliament of Ontario for the next number of weeks by ensuring, if it's passed, as we



assume it will pass later today, that when the House adjourns on March 6, it will stand adjourned until Tuesday, April 1, and the House will then meet for that week, including Friday of that week, essentially to deal with, as we know from what the government House leader has indicated to us, Bill 103 and Bill 104 — I'll come back and talk a little about those two bills — and then it will adjourn again for two weeks to give further time for committees to meet on a number of bills.

What are those bills and what is this motion all about? We know that those bills, starting with Bill 103 and Bill 104 but carrying on into a number of other bills, particularly Bill 106, which puts together a new municipal finance system in the province, and a number of many other bills that I'll have a chance to talk about as we go through this debate — what those are all about, in the words of the government, is the Who Does What. In our view they're more about who does what to whom.

What this package is all about, what indeed this special session of the Parliament is really all about, is Mike Harris putting into full effect his Common Sense Revolution as he sees it, his sense that what he's about and his whole purpose for existing as a government is not to govern in the best interests of all the people of Ontario but rather to govern for those two and a half to three out of 10 electors who voted for the Conservative Party last time.

Members opposite will say, "We got 45% of the vote." It's true, but we know, and action after action has confirmed, that this government simply acts in a way to try to maintain its level of support among, at the end of the day, those two and a half to three out of 10 eligible voters who actually voted for this Conservative government. They really don't care very much about what the other seven of those eligible voters have to say about any of these issues.

Why don't they care? They don't care because they see that their mandate is not to govern in the best interests of all Ontarians but is rather to govern in a way that will put more money and more power into the hands of fewer and fewer people, those fewer and fewer people being the wealthiest and already the most powerful citizens in our province. For the rest of us it means, "Get used to whatever crumbs fall along the way."

That's the action we see in Bills 103 and 104, that's the action we see perpetuated through the kind of rush this government has wanted to go through to implement this legislation, and that's what's behind this motion as this government wants to continue trampling on the democratic process and trampling on everything that's been good and solid about how Parliament in this province has worked for these 150 years since Confederation and even prior to that.

We will not be supporting this motion because we believe that what this government is doing is fundamentally wrong. We believe that a good government looks at the problems of the day — and we know the fiscal problems of the day are real — and says, "How can we fix them in a way that maintains those basic qualities, those basic tenets of our society, those things that have made and make Ontario, Canada, the envy of the world?"

That's not what this government is doing. What this government is doing instead is dividing people, dividing people into those that have and those that have not; it's dividing people into the wealthiest and the rest of us. They're saying: "If you're wealthy we're going to make you wealthier, if you're powerful we're going to give you more power, and if you're the rest of Ontario, forget about it. We'll let a couple of people on the opposition bench from time to time speak on your behalf, but we're not really interested in what you have to say."

1540

That's been the attitude we've seen from this government, and it's certainly been the attitude we've seen perpetuated in the way in which they have gone about handling these major pieces of legislation. Let's take a look at some of these things, what this government is doing and some of the details.

We know that most urgent in the government's schedule are Bills 103 and 104. Of course, they make the argument that the reason they need these two bills — Bill 103 being the megacity bill, the bill that forces amalgamation on Metropolitan Toronto, unlike any other area of the province, despite the objections of all of the local councils, despite the objections of hundreds and thousands of citizens who are expressing themselves through meetings, those few who have gotten the chance through the hearings on Bill 103, against what the government is doing. The government wants to go on.

We know that they equally want to press on with Bill 104, a bill that will reduce the number of school boards greatly, pulled together into very large school boards. Just to use the example here in Metropolitan Toronto, the new school board that will be created will have over 500 schools in its jurisdiction, will have 300,000 students in its jurisdiction. It will be a system that will be larger than the province of Alberta under one school board with 22 trustees, all of whom will be paid a paltry \$5,000 or \$6,000.

We know that will greatly reduce the ability of parents to have any influence in what goes on in their schools and in their children's education. It will greatly reduce any ability those school boards will have to make any real decisions to improve the quality of education. We know it's part and parcel of this government's plan to, in effect, take out of the system of education some \$1 billion across the province.

We see this kind of attitude continuing. Day by day we continue to see the arrogance that has become the trademark of this government exemplified. We saw it earlier today once again in the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, who only days ago was found by the Speaker, in putting out a leaflet praising the virtues, as he saw them, of the megacity, to be in *prima facie* contempt of this Parliament because in putting out that information he had deemed that Parliament didn't matter, that the bill, once introduced, was just as good as passed. That, of course, just happens to be contrary to the process around here. It also happens to be contrary to hundreds of years of parliamentary democracy.

But that wasn't enough for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, because just today we found out that one of the basic tenets of that bill was struck down.



We know that one of the things this government has relied on greatly in implementing its megacity bill has been the imposition of trustees. What did we hear today from the courts of Ontario? We heard that the appointment of those trustees was illegal, void, of no effect. Yet the minister would not stand in his place and make a statement to that effect, explain to us what he was going to do, how he was going to deal with it. His off-the-cuff remark was, "Well, if you want to know what I'm going to do, ask me a question."

It's that type of arrogance that we continue to see from that minister particularly, from other ministers in this government, from the Premier himself. It's that arrogance that has become the trademark of this government. It's that arrogance that will be the ruin of this government at the end of the day, because it's that arrogance that people are seeing more and more. It's that lack of caring about all Ontarians. It's that sense that comes from, "I know best." It's that sense that comes from, "I don't care what seven out of 10 Ontarians have to say; I only have to worry about the three out of 10 who are going to bother to vote for the Conservative Party." It's the attitude that is contemptuous of the democratic process that we have in this province.

Today we saw the Minister of Municipal Affairs, in the face of a decision by the Ontario Court of Justice, General Division, and Justice Brennan, not even prepared to stand up and admit that what he had done was wrong. His defence was: "Well, we weren't surprised by the decision. We did say that the trustees didn't have these powers until the legislation is passed." That was the minister's defence.

But it's interesting, if you look at the judgement, that the reality is somewhat different, because in the judgement Justice Brennan quotes, in effect, from what the minister said here in this House on one occasion, when he said — and this is Justice Brennan quoting Minister Leach — "We've also heard some politicians say that the advice of the board of trustees does not have to be recognized and that they have no legal right to do their job until the legislation is passed. That's technically correct." Here's the problem: "However," the minister says, "as the trustees' right to examine municipal decisions will be retroactive to the date this legislation was introduced it is in everyone's interests to cooperate with them."

That's exactly one of the things that Justice Brennan found was wrong with the order in council, because he went on to say, "On the very words of the orders in council which are the subject of this application it is apparent that from the time of their appointment the appointees were to fulfil the functions of the board referred to in the proposed act." That's what the order in council says. Then he goes on to say later on in the judgement — of course making the point that appointments under that authority must await the coming into force of the legislation; that point isn't in contention — "If these orders in council were allowed to stand, the government would be allowed to do indirectly what it cannot do directly."

That's the point that the minister either chose not to hear, chose not to understand, or that's the point that

simply bypassed him, because what the minister was doing was basically trying to have it both ways. He was hoping that in fact the courts would not find against him, because if he really believed, as he said here today, that he knew the orders in council were wrong, then he had lots of time prior to this judgement to actually get the orders in council changed.

For the people who may be following out there and may not understand what all the technicalities have to do with, an order in council is a decision made by the cabinet.

The minister had all of the time and all of the ability to go back and correct that problem if he really believed, as he was trying to say today, that he realized there was a problem, but he didn't, because he was hoping he wouldn't get caught on it.

That again is symptomatic of the way in which this government and this minister have been functioning. They just want to try to sneak stuff through. They just want to put things through, hoping that people will not understand, hoping that people will not be upset by what they're doing.

The reality is altogether different. The reality is that people are getting upset. People are angry at what this government is doing in trying to impose this megacity scheme here in Metropolitan Toronto, particularly when they say, "What's the rush?" Particularly when they see that the same rules that are being applied here to Metropolitan Toronto are not being applied to the rest of the greater Toronto area in the 905 area, where there has been a call for amalgamations, a call for changes to be made, and yet there, as is the right way to do it, municipalities are being given the opportunity to come up with proposals. Here in Metropolitan Toronto, "The minister knows best; the Premier knows best" is the attitude of this government.

Even out just not too far from here, in the Hamilton-Wentworth area, where there has been ongoing discussion about that issue, we have yet to see what the government is going to do with that. But so far, we have seen no sign that they want to try to impose a decision. If they persist in that attitude, that I will say is the correct one, because it's important that as these amalgamations take place — we believe change needs to happen. We're not here standing up defending the status quo, whether it's in Metropolitan Toronto or anywhere else in the province. But we believe that change, particularly when it's change that's going to be there for years to come, particularly when it's change that's going to affect the way in which local government will work not just for the next year or two but for the next 20, 30, 40 and 50 years, when those kinds of long-term changes are being made, it's incumbent upon a government that wants to be known as a good government to ensure that those changes come about only after significant discussion involving local politicians, involving the provincial politicians, the ministers responsible, and involving particularly the citizens in those jurisdictions who will have to live with the consequences.

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So we say on Bill 103 that what the government is doing is wrong, and I want to say to people who may be



watching this debate and to members across who are from outside of Metropolitan Toronto that this is not just a case of protecting the process in Toronto; this is not just a case of wanting to ensure that Toronto gets treated like others. We know that there are some across this province who like the idea of people beating up on Toronto, but I want to say to people, as I think people are beginning to understand more and more, that if this government is able to impose in this draconian way these draconian measures on the largest metropolis not only in Ontario but in Canada, then where does that leave all the other smaller municipalities? Where does that leave all the other municipalities in their ability to defend their local structures, to defend that sense of local democracy that has developed over the years? It means that if this government can impose its will against the expressed wish of the people here in the largest metropolis of Metropolitan Toronto, then it can do that and it will do that, haphazardly, as it chooses, in every other municipality that it chooses to do so, right across this province.

There is a message there that I think people are beginning to understand, and that message is coming across clearer and clearer as people are beginning to understand that this whole agenda is driven not by a desire to try to improve the governance structure, at least as it applies to Metropolitan Toronto, but is being driven primarily by the push of this government to push on to municipalities the cost of basic services that don't belong at all on the property tax system.

We know that is at the heart of what this government is doing. We know that the downloading of costs on to the property tax base, in the government's view, is simply a tradeoff for taking education off the property tax. But I think as people are looking at this — I'm not talking here about my own perspective on this, but I'm talking about the perspective of groups throughout the province, including groups like the board of trade here in Metropolitan Toronto, who say clearly that this is wrong, who say that putting social services like social assistance, child care, long-term care, the cost of taking care of our seniors, putting those costs on to the property tax system is wrong because those services have nothing to do with property taxes. Those services don't belong on the property tax system. Those services belong on the provincial income tax system, and that's where they should remain.

We know that what really is driving this agenda, as I said earlier, is this government's wish, this government's continuing insistence on making the rich richer and making the rest of us poorer. That's going to be true in a dollars-and-cents practical way and it's also going to be true in terms of our sense and our collective as a society.

What we will see as a result of these actions is a government taking over the cost of education, in and of itself not a bad thing, but it will not guarantee that the same dollar amount being spent on education now will continue to be spent. The minister has refused to answer that question on numerous occasions when we've put it to him, and the reason for that is because the real reason the Tory government is taking the cost of education from the property tax on to the provincial level is not so they can create greater equity across the province but so they

can, as they want to do and as they will do, take about \$1 billion out of the system of education.

They'll finesse that. I expect them to do that. We probably won't see much of that cut in 1997, but I say to people, watch the numbers for 1998, because you will see that money come out of the school system.

The Minister of Education likes to run around the province talking about the 45% of costs of education spent outside the classroom. He of course includes in that the costs of principals, vice-principals, support teachers, all those things and many others that go into making the classroom work, that make the school work.

As we speak here today, in one of the committees of this chamber people are speaking against Bill 104. People are pointing out that this is about taking money out of the system of education. That's what is going to happen with Bill 104 when the Minister of Education will have full control and full ability to take that kind of money out of our school system. It will mean at the end of the day that we will have more children in classrooms and fewer teachers in our classrooms.

I can tell you from my local perspective that my local school board estimates that to make up their portion of that \$1 billion in cuts, some \$240 million, as they estimate, even if they were to close down all the administration of the system, the one central office and the two area offices they have to run the system, even if they were to completely shut down the administration they would still be looking at having to cut about 20% of the funding that goes to each school. A 20% cut in the budget of each school means cutting into the classroom. It means putting more kids into classrooms, making them more overcrowded, and it means fewer teachers to do the job we want them to do for our kids and for their future. That's the story as far as education is concerned. That's what this government, with its doublespeak, is doing with respect to education.

But the story is even worse, because it doesn't stop at that. It doesn't stop at the undemocratic ways in which they're imposing the megacity here in Metropolitan Toronto. They continue then by putting on to the property tax system the costs of welfare, the costs of child care and the costs of long-term care, 50% of the costs, moving from the 20% we have now as a municipal responsibility in social assistance. That, everyone is beginning to understand, will mean higher property taxes. It will mean higher property taxes because those are exactly the costs that will increase over the next number of years.

As our population ages — and whether you're in Metropolitan Toronto or in northern Ontario or in the Ottawa area or in Windsor or in London or anywhere else in this province, that's the reality; our population is aging — we will need more services for our seniors. By pushing those costs to the property tax system, what this government is doing is saying to the municipalities: "You worry about that. We are washing our hands of that responsibility."

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Why are they doing that? They are doing that simply because they have to find \$3 billion in all of this process so they can fund the infamous provincial tax cut. It comes back to that because that's what it's all about,



even though it's the only promise made in the Common Sense Revolution that Mike Harris seems to be really intent on keeping. He seems to be so intent on keeping it that he doesn't care if in the process he ends up destroying the very fabric of Ontario, the very things that have made this the greatest place in the world to live and work in.

He is doing that because he wants to say, "I kept my promise about the 30% tax cut." He has forgotten the point he made continuously prior to and during the last election, that there was only one taxpayer and that governments should not, as Mike Harris put it then, resolve their problems by downloading their costs on to another level of government. He criticizes the federal government, as he should, when it does that, when it has taken some \$2 billion out of transfers to the province of Ontario, and we agree with him on that point, but then he turns around and does exactly the same thing to municipalities: a 45% cut to the municipalities this year and last year alone, and more to come now through this indirect way of increasing municipal taxes.

Mike Harris will be able to say: "See, I've given you the 30% tax cut. It's those municipalities that are increasing your taxes. They're the ones to blame, and if you don't like what they're doing, you can just turf them out of office. If they don't do what we want them to do, if they don't go into privatizing services" — as Bill 104 calls for, as they want municipalities to do as a way to lower costs — "if they don't get involved in this race to the bottom, they're the ones to blame. They're the ones who have increased your taxes."

You know what I see happening? I see people beginning to see through this façade. I see people beginning to understand that what this government is doing in Bills 103 and 104 is fundamentally wrong, because it's not about better government, it's not about improving our education system; it's about taking money out of our school system, it's about making our school system poorer and it's about imposing the will of this government on municipalities. It's about saying that Mike Harris will go to all ends to impose his will so that he can see through his 30% tax cut. If he was interested rather in good government, he would take the advice that's been given, but he's not interested in doing that.

We see even further examples of that in just one other bill I'll refer to that's also part of this great package: Bill 106. The government calls it the Fair Municipal Finance Act. We call it the downloading again of further costs on to the property tax base. I'm going to talk about just one provision of this bill, because so far this government has tried to create the impression that it supports business, particularly small business. I want to say to small business people to beware of Bill 106, because within Bill 106 and the imposition of market value assessment — I know the government calls it actual value assessment, somehow thinking that's softer or better, but it's not. I don't want to talk about that today; I'll leave that for another day.

The part of Bill 106 that small business should really take a good, hard look at is the business occupancy tax. What does Bill 106 do? It looks good on the surface because it removes the business occupancy tax, which is

a tax that small business particularly and others aren't too thrilled with. But then what does it do? It says to municipalities, "You figure out how you're going to make up the money that you now get from the business occupancy tax." And we're not talking about dollars and cents here; we're talking about \$1.6 billion that's raised through this tax across the province, some \$600 million just in Metropolitan Toronto.

What's the government saying to municipalities here? Right now, this tax allows municipalities to set it in a way that takes into account the different earning powers that businesses have, so there are variable rates. For example, small businesses pay 30% of the assessed value of the property they occupy, while banks are taxed at 75% of the assessed value of the property they occupy, and that's something that goes back to 1904. The principle of this bill was to be on the perceived ability to pay that some types of businesses were viewed to have, so therefore the differentiation in the levy had to do with the notion that a small business should not have to pay as much as a large business like a bank.

What we see here in the removal of this is the government saying to municipalities: "You find another way to raise the money. If you choose to find that money, you can just levy it on residential property taxes" — I'm not sure how many municipalities are going to do that — "or you can levy it right across the whole business conglomerate that pays taxes. If you do that, though, you have to apply a uniform rate of assessment."

What does that mean? It means that small businesses — and this is where I say to small businesses, "Beware these provisions of Bill 106" — would see about a 50% increase in the business taxes that they pay now. And guess what. Surprise, surprise. Banks, on the other hand, would see a 40% decrease.

That's consistent. It's very consistent with the principles that are guiding this government: "If you're rich and powerful and big, we're going to give you a break. We're going to make you pay less. If you're the rest of Ontario, in this case small business, we're going to make you pay more."

That's the philosophy that's driving this government, and I say to small business owners across the province to take a good, hard look at what Bill 106 does. Don't get fooled by the first part of the sentence that government spokespeople use when they say, "We're getting rid of the business occupancy tax." Ask the question, "What happens then?" and you will find that what happens then is that small business is going to get stiffed, and stiffed in a major way, because it's going to be the banks and the larger businesses and corporations that are going to get the tax break through Bill 106.

I don't know how many members of the government have actually looked at that or have received that kind of explanation as they have bought into this bill, but if they haven't, I say to them, "Take a good, hard look," because there are a bunch of people who want to run around saying how supportive they are of small business and how much support they get from small business. Let me tell you, when we get this bill in committee and we go through this discussion and people begin to understand what is going on, I don't think we're going to have the



same level of comfort from the government benches that we seem to have at this point and juncture.

That's the last point I want to speak on because in this process — and I have been following more closely Bill 103 as the critic for our party on that issue, but I know similarly in Bill 104 as the hearings have begun here in Toronto, and on Bill 104 there will be a few hearings outside of Metropolitan Toronto in other centres across the province, far less than what is needed in both cases to be able to hear the many hundreds of people who on both of those bills have expressed an interest in speaking. But as that is happening, I have begun to sense a certain uneasiness among the government backbenchers. I have begun to sense a certain discomfort that maybe, just maybe, what they're doing here isn't quite the right thing.

Now that may be because in their hearts they're beginning to question the validity of what they're doing, or it may be that being the electoral animals that we all are, they are beginning to understand that this could in effect be what brings them down as a government and what gets them defeated in their own constituencies come the next election. Whatever that is, whatever it is that's beginning to drive that uneasiness, I want to say to government members opposite, listen to what people are saying on these two bills, on Bill 106 and on the myriad of other bills over the next number of weeks. Even in the rushed way in which you insist on doing this, if you listen really hard you will hear the message that Ontarians are giving you right across this province.

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That message is that what you are doing is wrong; that downloading of costs on to the municipal taxpayers is the wrong way to go; that if you really believe that the deficit is the problem — and how many times have we heard members opposite talk about the \$1 billion a day or an hour that we are spending, however they want to play with these numbers? If that were really the problem, if that were really the focus, then you would not be proceeding with this 30% tax cut, which already, as you've implemented the first half of that, we know has not done what Mike Harris said was the purpose of it during the election, which is to create the 725,000 jobs.

We have seen statistics come out that show we are losing jobs in Ontario, not creating jobs. But even if you take the government's figures at face value, you will see that we are nowhere close to where we should be in creating the 725,000 jobs that they themselves said were really the ultimate reason why the Common Sense Revolution was set up and why this 30% tax cut is so important.

The 30% tax cut is not doing what it was supposed to do according to Mike Harris. It's not creating the jobs. It's not creating the jobs, according to their own figures. In the process it's destroying services in our health care system, as we point out to the Minister of Health day after day. It means that people are having to be served in corridors of hospitals because of the cuts in our hospitals. It means that as hospitals get shut down, we see no indication from this government of any understanding that this means that money, where there are justifiable amalgamations of hospitals to be made, needs to remain in the community, needs to be put into other forms of health

care. No, all we are seeing is the slashing; all we are seeing are the cuts that are resulting in a deterioration of our health care system.

We are seeing the same attitude with respect to our education system, as the Minister of Education on the one hand says to colleges and universities, "You go ahead and increase tuitions by up to 20%," and then turns around and says, "I'm not doing it; they're the ones who are doing it," and at the same time turns around and says, "I'd like to have control of the expenditures of our school system for elementary and secondary schools so I can take \$1 billion out of the system."

We are therefore seeing our health care system deteriorating, our children's education deteriorating, costs being put on to property taxes that will make property taxes increase, and all for what? So that Mike Harris can stand up at the end of the day and say, "I've delivered on my promise for a 30% tax cut"?

**Mr John R. Baird (Nepean):** It's creating jobs.

**Mr Silipo:** But it's not creating jobs. That's the point: It isn't creating the jobs. So if it's not creating the jobs, what's it all about? It's got nothing to do with creating jobs. It's all about making the wealthy in our province wealthier, making the powerful in our province more powerful and saying to the rest of us: "You don't care. You don't exist. We don't care about you. You don't count." That's the Mike Harris attitude.

They can cut it any way they want, they can put the best face, they can use the best doublespeak, but the reality is that people are beginning to understand what the agenda of this government is all about. It's not about creating jobs. It's not even about reducing the deficit, because if it were, then there would be no justification for the tax cut. It is about making the wealthy even more wealthy. It is making the rest of us poorer. It is destroying the very fabric of our society.

People understand that this is what the agenda of this government is all about, and you know what? They are getting angry, and as they get angry they are beginning to get upset and they are beginning to cause discomfort among the members of the government caucus opposite. As that discomfort grows, we will see to what extent they will hold the line or to what extent they will come to their senses.

This motion in front of us is wrong because it continues this action by this government of just ramming through the various pieces of legislation, whether it's Bill 103, Bill 104, Bill 106, many of the others. It's doing it all for the wrong reasons. People out there understand what's going on, people are getting angrier, people are getting more upset, and I urge them to continue to create discomfort among the members opposite.

In closing, I want to say one final word: Here in Metropolitan Toronto there will be yet one more opportunity for people to express themselves. Many have tried and been unsuccessful in expressing themselves, in expressing their opposition to what the government is doing through the hearings on Bill 103 and the hearings on Bill 104, but people in Metropolitan Toronto who live or own property in Metropolitan Toronto and are Canadian citizens will get an opportunity at least to vote on



the megacity bill throughout the days that are going on now and up to Monday, March 1.

I want to say to people very clearly: Take that opportunity and so no to Mike Harris if you agree with us that, in effect, what they are doing is so fundamentally wrong, as we believe many people are saying what they are doing is so fundamentally wrong. Then we will see if Mike Harris and Al Leach and all of his ministers dare to show so much contempt for the Parliament of the province and for the people of Metropolitan Toronto that they will continue to try to impose the megacity bill even against the express wishes of the people. I don't think they're going to be able to do that, but we will see what happens.

I just want to say to people: Take that opportunity that you have to express your view on the megacity bill and indeed to express your view on the actions of this government, because you believe, like us, that what they are doing is fundamentally wrong, it's destroying our society and it's doing it all for the wrong reasons.

**Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre):** On a point of order, Madam Speaker: We don't have a quorum, and this is a very important issue.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley):** Is there a quorum?

**Clerk Assistant and Clerk of Committees (Ms Deborah Deller):** A quorum is not present, Speaker.

*The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.*

**Clerk Assistant and Clerk of Committees:** A quorum is now present, Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** Further debate?

**Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre):** I appreciate the opportunity, and I want to pick up where my colleague the member for Dovercourt left off, because I think he has made excellent points in addressing the very issue that's in front of us. What is indeed before us today is a motion that would allow the government to proceed with the overwhelming agenda it has for the people of Ontario; it's not just for this place.

I think it's worth pointing out that this is not an agreement that we willingly come to, not by any stretch. The reason we're at the point this late, if you will, because this is a continuation of last fall's session, the reason we're here at this late date, finally struggling with the number of bills and issues in front of this Legislature is that we were fairly effective in slowing down this House. Not because we wanted to be obstructionist, but because this government was moving so quickly and with such little regard for the democratic traditions of this place that we felt an obligation to the issues that are indeed before this province to do everything we could to slow this steamroller down, to give people a chance, an opportunity to have their say, to digest what is going on, so they can think for themselves what the implications of these changes are.

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I think there are three main reasons why the government is indeed ramming things through and rushing them through and putting so much on the table at the same time.

First of all, I believe it's a deliberate attempt to overwhelm the people of the province by virtue of the number of bills, the magnitude of the bills, the implica-

tion of the bills, the amount of change that this represents at a time when there's global change around us that has already got people quite upset and quite nervous and apprehensive about the future. I believe they're deliberately loading all this on in front of us because they're trying to have the effect of people throwing their arms in the air and saying: "I just can't keep up with what's going on any more. I give up. They're not going to listen to us anyway." I really believe it's by design that they are doing this.

When I take a look at the agenda we have in front of us, just to mention a few — and this is not dealing with the issues that have already gone by, just the issues that are in front of us now — we've got, of course, the huge uproar over the Toronto megacity, an idea that, quite frankly, didn't even exist until a few months ago. It came out of nowhere. In fact the ministers of this government had said this was not a concept they liked. They didn't approve of it. Now we find it's going to be their vision of the future, and if they have their way it will indeed be the legislative structure of the people in this area. It has caused tremendous uproar, unlike anything we've seen in decades. That's one piece that's in front of us.

The education reform and changes, the downloading, all of those changes — when I was travelling around I spoke to a group just the other day and they said to me: "Dave, don't they understand this is going to hurt kids? Don't they understand this is going to hurt classrooms? Why are they rushing through so quickly? We're having trouble staying on top of it. We're not getting an opportunity to have our say." That's one standalone issue, an issue that is of such importance it deserves the kind of hearing and attention and analysis that people want to give it.

In my community of Hamilton there are parents, there are teachers, there are support staff who are clamouring for an opportunity to have a say, and they know they're going to get one quick hit with the bill that this government has in front of us, and that's it. They really don't understand why. They want to understand, but there is no answer other than they're deliberately trying to ram it through.

The firefighters, Bill 84: Remember the promise that the current Premier made when he was the leader of the third party? It's on videotape right there, and I recall the conference because I sent in a videotape as the Solicitor General at the time on behalf of our government and heard about Mike Harris's videotape and what he said.

He said, and I paraphrase, but he said very clearly, "I promise you, firefighters" — this was to their conference — "I won't make one change without thorough consultation." Well, the bill that's in front of us right now, Bill 84, not only didn't have thorough consultation, but firefighters in this province weren't even given the decency of seeing the day it was tabled here in the Legislature. He broke that promise. That's another bill that's in front of us, and when we talk about the implications of that for firefighting, for the safety of our communities, for the safety of our families, it has widespread implications.

Look at the government whip there laughing away. They think this is funny. The arrogance shows itself as



they laugh about all this. They mock the fact that I'm being loud. You're damn right I'm being loud, because we need to scream from the rooftops. You can make all the fun you want, but there's an awful lot of people out there who agree with what I'm saying right now, that you have no right to do this. You laugh all you want. The day of reckoning will come.

Then there are the changes to the Police Services Act. Again, massive changes, huge implications for the policing in our province. They're ramming that one through at the same time. There are also development charges; changes to the libraries, their funding and their governance; ultimately the privatization of the delivery of water; the red tape bills; it goes on and on. That's what in front of us right now, and that's not all of it; but those are some of the larger pieces that are in front of us right now. That's why we did what we did in terms of trying to slow down this government, to provide some modicum of democracy, some opportunity for people to have their say.

That's not taking into account the fact that we've already got the health restructuring commission going around shutting down hospitals all across the province, which is, by the way, on top of cuts you've already made to hospital budgets. There are an awful lot of people in my community of Hamilton and all across Ontario who are extremely concerned about what you're doing to health care, and how much opportunity are they having to have a say about that? You just ram that straight through.

Bill 99 is still to come before this House: massive changes to the WCB, taking \$15 billion away from injured workers and giving \$6 billion of it back to their employer friends, the very people, by the way, who owe every penny of the unfunded liability — not taxpayers; those same employers who are getting a \$6-billion gift are the ones who owe that unfunded liability. That's not just amendments to the WCB, I would point out, that's a completely brand-new WCB act, a bill that took years and decades to evolve because of the complexity, because of the fact that it involved life-and-death issues, the very health of workers. In one fell swoop they're going to massively change the way injured workers are treated in this province and, I might say, treated in a way that gives them the back of this government's hand.

Occupational health and safety: There's a discussion paper out there. That's happening now too. On top of everything else I've talked about, that's out there. One of the key things in there is a downloading of responsibilities away from this government back into the workplace, and ultimately they're going to water down the right of workers to refuse unsafe work. That's what that document's all about; that's going on as we talk about this too.

The Employment Standards Act, Bill 49 — that was only their first crack. There's still a discussion paper to come on that one, as they take another massive review of that entire piece of legislation. That's happening at the same time that I mention all these other things.

I make the case that this government is deliberately trying to overwhelm people so that they will ultimately give up in frustration and despair because they can't keep

up with what's going on. That's just what you want. You want people to throw their arms in the air, tune out, just say to themselves, "I can't do this any more. They're not going to listen anyway," and give up. I think that's part of your political strategy and I think it's part of your communications strategy.

Then, of course, overarching all of this is the \$8 million worth of ads, which is really upsetting a lot of people, the government should know. People really resent that. While all this is happening, they turn on their TVs and there's Mike Harris smiling away, saying, "Everything's wonderful, don't worry, be happy." The last time a Premier did that was the ads that David Peterson used in 1990. Remember? It was either on a train or on a bus. They had him sitting there saying, "All is well in Ontario."

That's when the polls said he was going to win by some 53%, and we know what happened there. I would suggest it would be wise for this government to take heed of that example, because that's what's happening here. While you're trying to sell this "Be happy, don't worry" message, underneath that, every sector of our society and every sector of our economy is absolutely appalled at what you're doing and how quickly you're doing it.

The second reason I think they have the agenda they have and why there's so much here and why we're back in special session and why things are being rammed through is because under this government's plans, all the horrible decisions that have to be made — because there are some horrible decisions that will have to be made as a result of your legislation. You're forcing that. It's being designed in a way that it's never this government that takes the blame. My colleague from Dovercourt mentioned this and I want to further emphasize it, because I think it's a crucial part of this government's overall strategy.

When they download all these services and when they push away responsibility in every area, ultimately they have the ability, as we've seen the Minister of Education do time after time after time, when there are decisions made that affect the classroom — and in my community of Hamilton that has happened; our classrooms have been affected. When that Minister of Education is asked the questions, he stands up and says: "Oh, I didn't make that decision. That's those local trustees. You go blame them. They're the bad people. I wouldn't do that because I told you we wouldn't do anything that hurts classrooms."

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The fact of the matter is that those decisions were made by our trustees, and I support our local trustees regardless of their political stripe. I think we have an excellent board both at the public sector and the separate sector; we have excellent people, high-quality people doing the best they can, but they have no alternative in many cases because you cut their funding. Then they make these decisions and your minister stands up and says: "Don't blame me. I didn't make the decision." That's what you're doing.

When we talk about hospitals being closed, when we talk about what's going on — it just happened yesterday in Ottawa, today in Pembroke, it will happen tomorrow in Toronto, we've already seen it in Sudbury and Thun-



der Bay and it's soon coming to London and soon enough, unfortunately, they're coming into Hamilton — because it's a commission that this government set up under Bill 26, the Minister of Health stands up and says: "I didn't make that decision. Go blame the commission." Ultimately as a result of the downloading of social services, community health care, non-profit housing, the funding of libraries, GO Transit, more highways, this government is hoping it can make local councillors and local aldermen scapegoats on those decisions.

That's part of this agenda and they're hoping people won't notice. Because there's so much going on, they're hoping people again will throw their arms up and say, "I can't keep track, I can't keep following it." When you open up your local paper and see a decision that affects your library or your local transportation or your local classroom, people will pay attention. The government is hoping that the average person will not make the linkage between what they're reading in their local paper about those decisions they care so much about, in terms of their health care and their education system and our infrastructure and services for seniors and the plight of our students and youth who are facing the highest unemployment rate they've ever seen, that people won't make the connection between that local decision and who made it locally and what happened here.

That's what they're hoping and that's why they're so arrogant, because they really don't care what anybody thinks today as long as during the next election they can deflect all the criticism and have the local elected people take the responsibility and the political heat for all these things. They're hoping they can march back into office again with a majority government and that they won't have to answer for what they're doing here.

I say quite reluctantly that they've got a chance of making that happen. As we know, in politics people have short memories. That's why I'm as loud as I am and that's why I consistently come back to this message. The only chance we've got as the opposition, for those of us who agree and believe in what I'm saying: We have to be loud and we have to be consistent and we have to be clear, because this government runs a good chance of convincing people that it wasn't they who did all these awful things, that it was all those other people. That's the second reason why I think we're seeing the kind of agenda and the speed with which things are being rammed through.

The third one is of course that at the end of the day this government has to find \$5 billion to pay for their 30% tax cut. I know that some of the government members roll their eyes. They're tired of hearing this, but unfortunately the truth won't go away. In the midst of all this cutting, because you say the debt and deficit are the absolute, paramount, important issue in front of us, you want us to believe that it makes any kind of economic sense at all to cut your own revenue by \$5 billion a year. Yet it's not even cutting revenue; they've got to borrow the money to give their rich pals a tax cut. That's what's so obscene about this. As we've predicted, and I've stood here and said it in the past leading up to this day, and it's happening and it will continue to happen, people are beginning to catch on.

As they listen to you say on the one hand that debt and deficit are the absolute number one priority, that nothing is more important, 10 years of blah, blah, blah — we all know what your mantra is — at the same time that you try to ram that message down the throats of people, you take \$5 billion out of the revenue stream, out of the income of the government, and give it back in large part, in majority part, to the most well-off in our society. You think people are going to miss that point, or at least you're hoping people will miss that point.

I say to the members across the way on the government benches that as people are having their hospitals closed, as they're talking to their teachers, support staff — and these are not New Democrats they're talking to, they're not Liberals; they include Tories, they include Reformers, they include people who are not aligned — the fact of the matter is that our health care system is suffering and your hollow words can't change that. You can stand up and say you're making the greatest, most wonderful health care system in the world all you want. That doesn't make it so, and your \$8 million worth of ads with Premier Harris standing there in a nice setting saying, "Everything is wonderful and we're going to fix everything," doesn't change reality at all.

People know in their communities. We've got a public forum being put on by the local media tonight about health care and what's happening. They're sponsoring it, along with the OMA and a number of other health providers in our community, and it's being emceed by Roy Green. You have to admit it's a balanced approach. We expect that there will be hundreds of people turning out this evening not because any particular political party put out a call saying, "Come on out, we've got to put together a political message and look like everybody is upset"; they'll be there because they are upset. They're worried about what's happening to our health care system. They want to know what happened to the promise that you weren't going to hurt health care, yet that's exactly what you're doing.

There's the reality of what's happening and you seem somehow — I'm not sure how the heck you're doing this — to believe that it's not happening. People in the health care system across every community know what's going on; people in the education system know what's going on; people in non-profit housing, people who are women's rights advocates, advocates for kids, people in poverty, all these people you're attacking know what's going on.

As I've said to the government members before, these are the very people whose door you have to go back to. You can hide now but during the election you've got to go knocking on that door and say: "Hi, vote for me. I'm with the government that took away your health care system and your education system and attacked the poor and attacked injured workers." That's going to be really well received: "Oh, yeah, of course we took care of rich friends, but it's important that we take care of the wealthy because of that whole trickle-down theory. Don't you appreciate being trickled on?" You have fun with that message, because that's all you've got at the end of the day unless, and I give you this, you're successful in convincing people that you didn't make any of those



awful decisions, that it was someone else or some other group, that it was those bad people, not you, that you wouldn't do that. Why? Because you said so.

You will be running for re-election in the reality of the Ontario you are creating and you won't have the ability to sit as you do now with that smug look on your faces here in the secure comfort of this legislative chamber. That's not the reality of the re-election campaign trail. That's why we're so angry at this agenda, because we believe this is what you're doing and this is why you're doing it.

I want to back up my arguments with a little bit of fact and a little bit of history. Again we are saying that you are throwing in the trash can all the traditional democratic rights and privileges citizens have had, that opposition members have had, and we're saying that's why this motion is here today as you try to ram through large chunks of your most awful agenda so you can get it behind you in the hope that people will forget, and when the decisions are made they'll blame someone else. But you can't escape your track record; you can't escape history.

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Let's not forget: In terms of democracy, in terms of fairness, in terms of access by the people to governing decisions, this party that talks about being so open and transparent and caring and consultative and the one that's promoting and pushing referenda as the be-all and end-all, this is also the same government that has to live with the stain of Bill 26. Remember that? It wasn't all that long ago.

Bill 26, the most massive transfer of the rights of this Legislature, which includes all parties and all representatives, to the regulatory decision-making of the cabinet room, took those powers and rights out of this chamber and put them in the cabinet room under regulations. As we know, cabinet meetings are closed, secret meetings. That's the way cabinet is run. Ours was the same way. I'm not suggesting there's something wrong with that tradition, but I am suggesting there was something inherently evil in one omnibus bill to take all that power away from this place, where we've got cameras and the public and an opportunity to see and hear what's going on and let the people decide for themselves, transfer that decision-making out of this environment and take it into the secrecy and privacy of the cabinet room. That was wrong.

It was wrong to introduce that bill in the first place, but you added insult to injury by then trying to ram it through in a few weeks. You were trying to deny people the opportunity to have input; as you saw it, trying to prevent them from attacking you, which they had every right to do, given what you were doing to the democratic traditions of this place.

In fact, it was such an obscenity that one of our members on the opposition — because at that time we were acting as one opposition body trying to fight for the rights and traditions of this great democratic place. It finally took one member, the member for Scarborough North — in a tactical move, I grant you; on a technicality, I grant you, but I also consider him to be a hero, and I hope the history books reflect that and acknowledge

him as such. He took a very courageous stand — or sit; took a very courageous sit — and he refused to leave.

We leapt out of our seats and ran over there and surrounded him so that he couldn't be thrown out. Why? Not as a tactic just to make a point about some arcane political difference between the parties here; because we were trying to bring to the attention of the people of Ontario: "Look what they're doing. This is wrong." We physically stood between him and the Sergeant at Arms, whom we had and still have the greatest respect for.

Eventually this government caved in, it blinked, because it had no choice. The end result really wasn't all that wonderful. It gave us a few more weeks of public hearings. But at least it gave us a little more opportunity than what this government was trying to do. Remember, this was just a couple of weeks before Christmas. It was a cynically designed plan to ram through the transfer of power from this place to that place as quickly as possible and hopefully people would move into the Christmas season and forget all about it. Well, you didn't get away with it, but you have to answer for it. Every one of you has to answer for Bill 26. That stain and that stench will stay on this government forever.

But it doesn't end there. That's not the end of the evidence. The other evidence we have — and I know my friend the member for Nepean will appreciate this part — is the anti-worker Bill 7, where you said you had a mandate to revoke Bill 40, and you said, "That's why we have a right to do what we're going to do and make the amendments to the Ontario Labour Relations Act," except you didn't amend it; you replaced the entire law from front to back.

Not only did you give us back the ugliness and the harm that comes from legalizing scabs, which you've now done, and as a result there are thousands of people on strike who wouldn't otherwise be if their employer wasn't allowed to use scabs — you did that — but in addition to that, you also took away the legitimate, lawful successor rights that public sector workers have, that private sector workers have to maintain and keep their collective agreement and their jobs and their job security and their wages and their benefits. I see some of the staff around here who know exactly what I'm talking about, because they're faced with it.

That, in large part, led to the first strike that we ever had. Unfortunately, it was not only an ugly strike, it was a bloody strike. People were hurt. That strike should never have happened. This government did not run on a platform of taking away those rights from those workers, tens of thousands of workers whose jobs you intend to privatize, that will turn into minimum wage jobs with no job protection. Those workers aren't even guaranteed an opportunity to have those low-paying jobs, and if they're middle-aged workers, they're terrified. But you didn't run on that platform. There's nothing in the Common Sense Revolution about it. You had no right.

You also slashed \$10 million, took \$10 million away from workers whose jobs are lost because of plant closures and whose employer doesn't have the money or won't give the money to pay them severance and termination pay they're entitled to. You took that away from



them. You took \$10 million away from future unemployed workers. You didn't talk about that on the campaign trail, it's not in the Common Sense Revolution, but it's in Bill 7.

What happened with Bill 7? Bill 7 was introduced for first reading, second reading, third reading, in less than one month, not one minute of public hearings; in fact, second and third reading were rammed through in one day, Halloween, which I still say is quite apropos, because that's when the mask came off. That's when we saw. That was the precursor to Bill 26. When you saw what you could get away with in Bill 7, that's when you decided to go for the gusto and that's when you went with Bill 26, just a few weeks later.

You rammed that through in the most undemocratic fashion we've ever seen around labour law. There was a time traditionally, regardless of the government of the day, and for most of the decades in recent history it's been Tories, where no Premier would change a single word of the Ontario Labour Relations Act without serious hands-on consultation, yes, with business, but also with the president of the Ontario Federation of Labour and key labour leaders representing hundreds of thousands of workers in this province. Why? Because there was a sense of balance, of trying to bring some fairness to labour relations. You did none of that and you rammed that bill through in the most undemocratic fashion we had ever seen until you topped that one with Bill 26.

But that's not the end of it. We saw the same thing with Bill 49 — here we go again, going after workers — the Employment Standards Improvement Act. That was the bill you introduced last May and said, "Oh, this is just minor housekeeping, a few nuts and bolts." You know, we do have bills like that, so people took the Minister of Labour at her word. She said it was only nuts and bolts, minor housekeeping. When she met with labour leaders the week before, they believed her. Labour leaders have respect for the traditions of this place and ministers of the crown.

Regardless of what government members may think about labour leaders, they have great respect for the offices of this Legislature, but when ministers of labour do things like this minister did in introducing a bill that wasn't just minor housekeeping and nuts and bolts — it took away major rights from workers and most affected workers who don't have unions. If you have a union you've got a collective agreement and there's usually a lot more protection in there, and if you don't have a union you've got a lot fewer rights now in this province than you did before this government passed Bill 49.

They were going to ram that through in a few weeks and were going to make it law by the end of June, a month and a half. It was only because of the fight of the labour movement on behalf of non-unionized workers in large part and of our party, the NDP, that forced the government into province-wide public hearings. I know that my colleague from Nepean has great fond memories of that province-wide tour, as he attempted as valiantly as he personally could — but you can't on that agenda — to defend what his Minister of Labour had said about that bill and what it was and what it wasn't.

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The fact of the matter is that on the first day of those hearings the minister withdrew one of the most controversial pieces of what she had called a minor housekeeping bill.

That's your track record of democracy and traditional rights of the people and the opposition in this place, and that's why we're so angry. That doesn't end it. The list goes on and on.

When we are here today debating the calendar motion, as it's called, this indeed is one of those opportunities where you're going to see opposition members like myself on our feet screaming and hollering and hammering and making the point that you have no right to do what you're doing as quickly as you're doing it. You don't have a mandate and you certainly do not have the traditional rights to do it.

That's why we're so angry and that's why we make the point over and over that it's a cynical, deliberate attempt on the part of this government to overwhelm people to the point of despair so that they'll stop paying attention, so that ultimately the horrible decisions you're going to inflict on our society and our communities will be made by someone else you can blame at election time to escape responsibility for your decisions, and ultimately to find that \$5 billion to pay for your hideous tax cut, your 30% tax cut that your very wealthy friends are going to benefit from the most.

**Mr Joseph Spina (Brampton North):** Nobody's buying that.

**Mr Christopherson:** I hear one of the backbenchers over here in the rump section, another one of the members who consistently gets himself in trouble by engaging his mouth before he does his brain, saying, "Nobody's buying it." I'm betting they are. You go out there in those communities. Wait till we go out across the province on the bills that are going out. We'll see which committees you're on and how much fun you're having defending your Common Sense Revolution.

**Mr Frank Miclash (Kenora):** You should have been in Dryden Monday night.

**Mr Christopherson:** It sounds like Dryden had an interesting meeting.

All across the province, anywhere you go; I'm sure you're welcomed in certain quarters, as long as it's nice and quiet with no public and nobody knows about it, but outside there's an awful lot of people who are very worried and very frightened, particularly if they aren't well-to-do. If you're well-to-do, you've got nothing to worry about with this agenda because you can buy your way out of it, buy the education system you want for your kids, buy the health care system you want, move to whatever beautiful area you can afford with all the amenities that go with that and the security that goes with it. If you've got money, you really don't need to worry about this agenda; in fact, you're going to benefit from it, based on that 30% tax cut. But for the vast majority of the working stiffs who are out there, stiffed is exactly what you're doing to them. That is why we are so angry and will continue to take on this government at every turn.

**Mr Baird:** I'm very pleased to have the opportunity to rise and to speak on the motion of the government House



leader with respect to the schedule of this House and of committees over the next three or four weeks. I think it's very important to put on the record the legislative calendar. The Legislative Assembly, after it breaks before Christmas, doesn't normally come back until March. What Mike Harris said is that he respected the legislative process and wanted a sufficient period of time to debate each and every one of the Who Does What bills and allow for each one of them to go to committee. He asked all members of this House, "Would you be prepared to come back early and work a little harder this year to get more work done?" Indeed, we as a caucus said yes. I know my colleagues on the opposition benches were very keen as well to come back and to work harder on these extra pieces of legislation.

This resolution is all about allowing the Legislature to break so that the committees can travel outside of the city of Toronto and go to places like Ottawa and visit northern Ontario and southwestern Ontario to get input on a good number of government initiatives and government bills. That's obviously a very important part of our job and that's what this motion is all about.

I would like to also say at the outset that this process of the committees travelling has been negotiated with the opposition parties, and that's an example of the system working, of the process working, of all three parties in this assembly working to put together an acceptable process for bills and pieces of legislation to be debated. That's often underreported, because I know all members of the House want to get these pieces of legislation to committee where they can be properly considered.

One of the pieces of legislation we want to send to committee — and I've received a good number of letters from folks in my constituency — is Bill 84 with respect to fire services in Ontario. I got a good number of letters asking me to come here to Queen's Park and talk to my colleague the Solicitor General and push for public hearings on this piece of legislation. That's something I did and I'm pleased that the Solicitor General has pushed for public hearings as well on that piece of legislation.

In my community, there's a tremendous amount of respect we have for the firefighters, who do a great job and are really the local heroes in our community. We look forward to having them come before the committee and to listening and learning what they have to say. They do a very good job and I'm very pleased they'll have the opportunity to come forward and tell us what they have to say. The government has already said it's prepared to listen and even prepared to amend Bill 84 if it can make it a better bill, which we're very pleased about.

This motion also allows for debate and committee time for Bill 98, the Development Charges Act, which is something that's very important in an area like Nepean, with a terrific amount of development over the last number of years. In fact, Nepean already beat the provincial government to the punch. They cut development charges significantly, by almost 50%, earlier in the year. They did that to get more homes built and to encourage job creation. Economic growth is a top priority. As you'll know, I often talk about the priority folks in my area put on job creation. This piece of legislation is just another

effort on the government's part to try to encourage job creation and economic growth in Ontario.

There's a terrific number of young families in my constituency in Nepean in areas like Barrhaven and Longfields and Davidson Heights and Centre Point, where folks have paid very high development charges. Those charges go right on their mortgages and it makes the dream of owning a new home that much further out of reach of young families. I know this is a bill that a lot of young families and first-time home buyers across Ontario are going to be watching very closely, because we want to do everything we can as a government to make home ownership more within arm's length of working families in the province of Ontario. That's a very big issue in my constituency.

The motion talks about the City of Toronto Act. There's been five weeks of public hearings. Last week I went into the committee and the Premier was sitting in on the committee hearings to listen to what the folks in the city of Toronto and in Metropolitan Toronto had to say. I think it speaks well that he took the time to come. I think it's the first time in a number of years that the Premier of the province has come to —

**Mr Dan Newman (Scarborough Centre):** The Toronto Star said that.

**Mr Baird:** "The Toronto Star says that," says the member for Scarborough Centre. I should note that the member for Scarborough Centre has been at virtually every single hearing, morning, noon and night, working very hard to represent the good people of Scarborough Centre, something that's been noticed by many members of this House.

The motion also discusses Bill 104, the Fewer School Boards Act. That's a very important piece of legislation. That's the piece of legislation that deals with the reduction in the number of school boards of Ontario. That's probably a less contentious issue than most. I noticed, from the Hansard and from speeches and comments that all members of this House have made at one time or another, that there seems to be broadly spread support.

Of course, the school board reductions were recommended by a former Liberal cabinet minister, John Sweeney, appointed by the then NDP government to do the job, so you've got an NDP-appointed former Liberal cabinet minister making recommendations to a Conservative government. They're adopting almost 75% or 80% of his recommendations. That speaks well of all members of all parties working well together.

**Mr Bart Maves (Niagara Falls):** Common sense.

**Mr Baird:** "Common sense," the member for Niagara Falls says.

Indeed, if we look at what some members have said on this issue, one member said, "I think there is generally fairly broad support for reduction in school boards." Do you know who said that? Was it the Minister of Education? No, it wasn't.

**Mr Bill Grimmett (Muskoka-Georgian Bay):** It would probably be a Tory.

**Mr Baird:** Was it a Tory? No.

**Interjection:** Dave Cooke?

**Mr Baird:** No, it wasn't Dave Cooke. It was Dalton McGuinty.



Another member said: "We can't back away from the prospects of amalgamation. As Liberals, we're fiscally responsible. We've got to look at it." Do you know who said that?

**Mr Grimmer:** Brendan McGuinty.

**Mr Baird:** Brendan McGuinty? No, Dalton McGuinty, I indicate to the member for Muskoka-Georgian Bay.

Another interesting quote: "There is such public support for streamlining this system that any government is going to have to follow through." Do you know who said that? Dave Cooke, the NDP Minister of Education.

It shows there is broadly spread support that transcends party lines on this issue, which I think is very important. He said that quote when he was the Minister of Education. Most members of the New Democratic Party, you can like their policies or dislike them, but they only have one set of policies. That, of course, is different from one of the three political parties in Ontario.

1700

Bill 104, that's a part of this motion that will allow that to go to committee hearings around the province. Certainly a good number of members in this House have gotten up and spoken about the importance of committee hearings in the democratic process. Democratic principles are very, very important.

That's why we were disappointed in my constituency to read an article in the paper the other day, "Liberals Accept Appointed Candidates: The practice of parachuting star candidates into ridings caused another outcry recently when the Liberals froze nominations for candidates in the Nepean-Carleton riding," basically suspending democracy in allowing the leader of the Liberal Party, Jean Chrétien, to just appoint candidates to come into Nepean-Carleton and to tell us who will and who won't be our member of Parliament.

I'll tell you, there's a good amount of concern on this issue, not only in Nepean-Carleton but, as the members for Scarborough Centre and Durham East indicate, particularly in Thornhill where they're concerned that the Prime Minister will just appoint one of his chosen parachute candidates to come in and try to impose the democratic will on the folks rather than allowing the free democratic will of a nomination meeting.

That's something that causes me great concern, as I know it causes concern to my colleague the member for Fort York because I know he cares about the democratic process and he wouldn't want to see that. Mon cher collègue le député de Fort York, bien sûr, était d'accord avec mes remarques, mes sentiments à cet égard.

I look at other pieces of legislation that are going forward, other than the school board amalgamations. On the school board amalgamations, there was an interesting article. I regret the member for St Catharines just stepped out for a moment because he's been here for most of the debate. In the St Catharines Standard there's a fellow working with the Canadian Union of Public Employees in the Niagara region and he said, "All Harris cares about is teachers and supplies for the classroom." That's all he cares about. All Harris cares about is the classroom where the teachers are. Certainly there's a disproportionate concern on the Premier's part and on behalf of members on this side of the House to ensure that as many dollars

as possible reach the classroom — where the teachers are, where the education takes place, where the children are, where the studies take place. That's very, very important. I certainly think that's important because the teachers who educated me had a tremendously positive impact on my life.

*Interjections.*

**Mr Baird:** I know the honourable members opposite agree with that and I appreciate their supportive comments in that regard.

This motion that we're debating also deals with some tax issues. The Fair Municipal Finance Act deals with property taxes. When I look at the issue of taxation, it's probably one of the most important issues to folks across Ontario. I was reading the Toronto Sun and I saw a headline, "Martin Admits Taxes Too High," talking about the federal Liberal minister.

I know my colleague from Fort York will want to bien entendre mes remarques à cette égard, mon collègue M. Marchese. I read in the Toronto Sun, "'Obviously I think taxes are too high,' Finance Minister Paul Martin said." And then he says, "...and we would like to bring them down, but we're not going to bring them down." So he flipped and flopped in the same sentence, which was rather remarkable.

The article goes on to say, "Nor would the finance minister choose between investing in government programs like health care or offering Canadians tax cuts. He says, 'I think we should do both.'" I wondered where I had seen that before. That's just like the Premier of Ontario, Mike Harris, where he's saying we're going to cut taxes and spend \$300 million more on health care this year, which is something that's very important indeed.

This bill also deals with some of the Who Does What legislation, and I have two quotes that I think are very salient to that issue. Alan Tonks, Metro chairman, says: "The province is listening; they've responded. I think my total reading of this is that we're now working in the same direction to make a unified city work." You know who said that? Alan Tonks, the Metro chairman.

Another article I read in the Toronto Star, "Province Clearly Protecting Taxpayer," says, "'I think the government clearly wants to make sure that what we do is indeed to protect the property taxpayer,' Terry Mundell said after the meeting with Municipal Affairs Minister Al Leach and Community and Social Services Minister Janet Ecker," which is something that I think is very good news.

I know the members opposite will be very pleased to see the chairman of Metropolitan Toronto and the president of the Association of Municipalities of Ontario working with the government, trying to make these transitions absolutely as smooth as possible, but that simply couldn't happen unless this motion went through and unless we can allow these bills to go out to committee and be debated fully by the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and a good number of committees that will go around.

The member for Hamilton Centre referred to our hearings on Bill 49. We indeed had an excellent opportunity to travel the province and learn the views of the folks, of the people of Ontario, on labour and employ-



ment standards. I know I speak for all my colleagues who travelled on that committee. We enjoyed having the opportunity.

I am going to yield the floor to allow mon cher collègue le député de Fort York l'opportunité de discuter ce projet de loi et cette motion. I appreciate the time.

**Mr Sean G. Conway (Renfrew North):** I am pleased to join in the debate this afternoon on the motion regarding the parliamentary calendar. As previous speakers have observed, we are this year involved in a somewhat different schedule than has been customary, although we have had winter sessions before.

There is currently before the House a motion standing in the name of the government House leader to set the schedule for the next few months. As previous speakers have indicated, there are pressures on all members, on the government I suppose most especially, having to do with a number of very important bills that have been introduced, some of which have had second reading, some yet to reach that stage, almost all of these bills touching on extremely important matters of public policy and human services. In my part of eastern Ontario today the work of the Health Services Restructuring Commission is without a doubt the most important work that any provincial government agency is doing these days.

I was struck earlier today during question period about the points of order and points of privilege that arose around various court rulings, one involving Mr Justice Brennan, I believe, striking down some part of one of the bills, the city of Toronto municipal bill. The charge, I gather, and I haven't read the judgement — it certainly seems to be the case that one Ontario judge felt and ruled that in an important way the current government of Ontario had acted outside of its legal mandate in putting these trustees, these overseers, in place before the city of Toronto bill has passed.

I want to make the observation today that we have seen in recent times, but most especially in the last year, a fairly significant if not dramatic departure from the way we have generally done business here. At the present moment we have two or three pieces of legislation — I think of the City of Toronto Act, I think of the education bill — where we are establishing boards or commissions. In the case of the city of Toronto municipal bill, the issue that Mr Justice Brennan apparently took exception to was the mandate of the overseers, Val Gibbons and whoever the others are.

Bill 104, the education bill, creates something called the Education Improvement Commission, I think it's called, a commission with sweeping powers. It would be an interesting piece of research for someone to look back into the postwar period of Ontario to see if you could find another such commission where the powers were as sweeping in an area as basic and as sensitive as education. I'm not saying such a commission does not exist, but I cannot think of a precedent for the Education Improvement Commission, ably staffed by two people I know well, the former minister in the Rae government, Mr Cooke, and the former chair of the Metropolitan Toronto School Board, Ann Vanstone, two people who know the education business very well. I would say to the House that if you look at the powers we intend to vest in

that commission, they are enormously significant powers touching on all aspects of one of the most important and sensitive public policy areas that fall to the province, namely education.

1710

I think in Brockville today, in Ottawa today, in Petrolia today, there are a lot of people who are wondering, where did this Health Services Restructuring Commission come from? Who gave this group of people, under the leadership of Dr Duncan Sinclair, such enormous power? I can imagine the debate in Brockville today or in my town, Pembroke, where today we have received the final report of the Health Services Restructuring Commission on the city of Pembroke hospital future.

I see the member for Sarnia. I don't know whether they ruled today on Sarnia, or does that come tomorrow? Has it been done?

**Mr Dave Boushy (Sarnia):** It's delayed.

**Mr Conway:** It's delayed. At any rate, there are a lot of people in communities such as the ones I've just mentioned who are undoubtedly wondering, where did these people get this power? They got it from this Legislature. They got it from the grant of this Legislature. In the case of the hospital restructuring commission, it was established under the aegis of Bill 26, which was passed here amidst much controversy a year and some weeks ago. We are presently looking at the education bill and the city of Toronto bill where again we are empowering, in a dramatic way, two new commissions to go and do some extraordinary work in the area of local government and schools.

I really begin to wonder, as I'm sure a lot of people do, what is the future of the Legislature? I know there's at least one person, who represents Nipissing, who has a view that really we should probably take on the calendar of the Mississippi or the Nevada legislature, where they sit maybe a week a year and where you basically have an election every two or four years and you empower an executive and that executive governs in a very executive fashion, and then you submit a report card every two or four years and let the people decide.

We had members of the previous NDP caucus — I don't know that there were any in the government, but there were certainly people in the NDP caucus — who used to wonder: "What is all this talk in committees about? We won the election in September 1990" — which was absolutely right; they won it quite handily — "and now we have a mandate for five years to go and do important work. Don't you people in the opposition understand that we've got the mandate and the rest of this is just so much trifle and so much distraction?"

I have seen a growth in that kind of mentality around this place in the last number of years, though I don't believe it is entirely new to recent legislatures. There are a lot of people in the land today who don't have a great deal of time or patience for the kind of debates that parliaments were intended to offer.

But I do express a personal concern about the growing reliance on these delegated powers whereby we simply come together, the government with its majority simply forces the bill that creates the hospital restructuring commission through in a way that is entirely predictable.



I guess I make this point in a non-partisan way, because I think we've all done it to one degree or another, though I do think it's a fair observation to make that the current Harris government is showing a particular enthusiasm for this kind of parliamentary practice, this kind of policy-making, that you simply create a bill like the city of Toronto bill or Bill 104, the education bill, empower some wise people to go and take the delegated authority, go and do the dirty work and keep it out of politics and certainly keep it out of the Legislature.

I don't know that that's going to be, in the end, a winning strategy, because in Pembroke today or in Brockville today or in Gloucester today I suspect that many of the people who reside in those communities imagine that Runciman and Conway and Morin and Grandmaître have some responsibilities for what's being done. I simply make the point that it is not likely to fool very many people to create these commissions.

Somebody said the other day: "It seems to be going rather well. Nobody is much complaining." Well, they may not be complaining because the impacts have yet to be felt. I simply ask members to take a look at the powers being attached to or being vested in the Education Improvement Commission. It is an extraordinary set of circumstances. I can't imagine that there are very many people who, if they understood what was intended by those powers, would be very happy.

#### *Interjections.*

**Mr Conway:** It's very difficult. I am having a real problem.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson):** Order, please.

**Mr Conway:** The point I want to make again is simply that the people we represent imagine we have some responsibilities. To hear the minister of police, the Solicitor General, quoted today saying he knew nothing about what was done to an important provincial facility in his home city of Brockville is rather distressing, because most people are going to expect that not only a member of the Legislature but a leading minister of the administration would have something to do — and I don't say this critically of him.

I see the member for Owen Sound is here. I know, from reading the western Ontario press, that he's at least anticipating what might happen in his part of Grey-Bruce. I don't think he's trying to create the impression that he is not going to be involved and is not going to accept some measure of responsibility. I congratulate him for that. We all have that responsibility to shoulder, and I hope there's no one who thinks that at the end of the day, if the hospital is to close, if we're going to have local authorities for school purposes just swept aside by some kind of provincially appointed tribunal, that we're going to be excused of our responsibility.

There is no doubt that there is an appetite for change, not just in the political environment but elsewhere, but I don't believe the Ontario population has lost its sense of fairness, its sense of balance.

One of the things I find quite interesting in a number of the current issues is that there is yet again a lot of evidence that hope is winning out over experience. I look at a number of the key initiatives, the very controversial

ones like education and health care. Let's take municipal realignment and education. I'm not standing here to say there shouldn't be change. I believe, for example, that we can have and ought to have fewer school boards, but it's as though nobody remembered anything from the 1960s or 1970s.

A full generation ago we had a marvellous experience with reducing by very large numbers the number of school boards in the province. I forget the actual number. Bill Davis took the number of school boards in the province I think from several thousand down to 200. We also took municipalities, particularly in south-central Ontario, and reduced them by a substantial number. In both cases it was argued passionately by politician and bureaucrat that one of the major benefits of the creation of the larger units would be this: that the per unit price of most things would come down, at least in relative terms, and the service to the taxpaying public would remain attractive or reasonable.

I ask anyone who's been around for more than 15 or 20 years, did that happen? Let me say there have been some very real benefits to having larger units. I grew up in rural Renfrew county and I can tell you the creation of the county board of education provided some very real benefits, but there were some very substantial costs that went with those benefits. Not surprisingly, some of those costs were as follows: The units, as they became larger, became more centralized, and consequentially they became more bureaucratic. That sense of direct involvement by the citizen was for many people reduced.

#### **1720**

I don't need to rethrash the story about some of the famous regional governments. I remember one of the ablest people ever to be in this place, Jimmy Allan, talking about what happened when the regional municipality of Haldimand-Norfolk was created. But it's as though nobody has remembered anything. A priori, I say to the quizzical-looking member for Oxford, it is argued, "Make it bigger, it is going to be better and it is going to be cheaper." I just don't think there is evidence to support that claim. Unlike some of my colleagues, I'm going to be very generous on this. I want to give you lots of time and lots of room and lots of rope.

I was using the analogy the other day, watching friend Al, the Minister of Municipal Affairs: I had this image of a bear coming to a cage with the door open and there's honey, lots of it, just ladled around the entrance, and I see Pal Al licking at the honey at the cage door. I'm only really going to be happy when I see all of Al in that cage. I want all of Al in that cage. If I have to take an extra few weeks or an extra few months — listen, unlike some of my colleagues, I'm very patient — I want all of Al, like a big, big bear, in that cage.

He may be right and I may be wrong. It may be that in 1997 the creation of larger units will in fact produce that which accords to all of our common senses. I don't know anybody who doesn't think that surely it is the case that if you make them bigger, they're going to be more efficient and the per unit price of most things has surely got to drop. For a variety of interesting and sometimes complex reasons, in most cases it doesn't happen.



I shouldn't tell a story out of school, but maybe I can, about Tom Wells. A certain David Cooke was determined he was going to force the amalgamation of the city of Windsor and the Essex county school boards, and there was no doubt that what he wanted was an amalgamation, because he said — I believe he said — that he was going to bring the costs down. Off went Tom Wells, a very fine fellow, a former long-time member of the Legislature, Minister of Education. Wells came back — and perhaps Marion can help me — and he did not recommend what we all believed, what the then minister wanted. He did so on the basis that what you want and what you intend to do here are almost mutually exclusive.

Now having said that, I'm not going to argue that there cannot be efficiencies with the forced amalgamation, quite frankly, of some of the higher-cost services. I thought the government was off to a relatively good start by using the fiscal instrument to make people behave in a more responsible way, and I accept my share of the responsibility for past formulae which may have encouraged bad behaviour. But I'm getting off the point, this slavish devotion to the concept that if we make it bigger it will be better and in most cases the per unit price of things will drop. I am from Missouri. I remain sceptical.

**Mr Grimmett:** It needs patience.

**Mr Conway:** My patience is aided and abetted by reading the latest edition of Cottage Life, where I see Mr Hardeman quoted at length in the cover story: "Will the Common Sense Revolution Save Cottage Country or Is It a Monster in the Making? The Big Fix." A great piece. My friend from Muskoka will want to read it. Any of you representing cottage country and any of you owning a cottage will also want to read it as well.

**Interjection:** What does the Eganville Leader say about this?

**Mr Conway:** What does the Eganville Leader say about this? That's a good point. This week's Eganville Leader contains a lead editorial which raises something that I know the former reeve of Rodden would want me to point out. The Eganville Leader this week, I say to Normie Sterling, says, "The state of winter highway maintenance in our part of eastern Ontario is deplorable," and I would add, it's no wonder that wheels are flying off Al Palladini's snowplows given the condition of some of these roads.

I spent Saturday driving up the Trans-Canada Highway from Pembroke towards Mattawa and it was a disaster. It was a dangerous and disastrous situation. There was a terrible accident up on the Bissett Hill, halfway between Deep River and Mattawa. Some people might laugh —

**Mr Rosario Marchese (Fort York):** I don't want to interrupt the member from Renfrew, Mr Speaker, but there is no quorum and there should be.

**The Acting Speaker:** I'm sorry. Do you mean to interrupt or don't you?

**Mr Marchese:** Mr Speaker, there is no quorum in this House and there should be.

**The Acting Speaker:** Would the table please determine if a quorum is present?

**Acting Clerk Assistant (Mr Todd Decker):** A quorum is not present, Speaker.

*The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.*

**Acting Clerk Assistant:** A quorum is now present, Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** The Chair recognizes the member for Renfrew North.

**Mr Conway:** The point is, it's a very important service for people that the member from Hastings and I represent, and I'm very serious. The winter maintenance on Ontario highways in my part of the province is not acceptable and we are putting —

**Mr Bill Murdoch (Grey-Owen Sound):** I don't agree with that.

**Mr Conway:** You may not agree with me on that, and that's fine. I'm just telling you that on Saturday of this past weekend, any one of you who drove or tried to drive on the Trans-Canada Highway between Pembroke and Mattawa would have been horrified. You would have been into either Conway's office or Eves's office or —

*Interjection.*

**The Acting Speaker:** Order.

**Mr Conway:** Listen —

*Interjection.*

**The Acting Speaker:** Would the member for Grey-Owen Sound take his own seat, please.

**Mr Conway:** I'm sure you have. Do you know what? So have I. I make allowances for bad winter conditions, and I'm doing that. But we have a responsibility as a Legislature and as a provincial government in a province so large to ensure that people and commerce that have to travel across these provincial highways have an acceptable level of winter maintenance.

I'm telling you that in my part of eastern Ontario, notwithstanding the excellent efforts of good, hardworking people, both in the public and in the private sector, the current maintenance is not acceptable and it is threatening the security and the safety of Ontario citizens or others who happen to be travelling through, in my case, the Upper Ottawa Valley.

**Mr Murdoch:** Do you not realize the winter is under the federal Liberals?

**Mr Conway:** I do not want to be lighthearted about this issue.

**Mr Murdoch:** You can't help the weather.

**Mr Conway:** Listen, we've had plenty of bad days over the 25 years that I've been driving around this province.

**The Acting Speaker:** The member for Grey-Owen Sound, come to order.

**Mr Conway:** When I am told by good, hardworking Ontarians who are in the employ of the provincial government that notwithstanding the bad winter weather, the current standard is not good enough, when I talk and listen to people whose job it is to look after these highways, who in many cases have worked 10, 15 and 20 years on those highways, I think I'm duty bound, as I think all of you would be, to listen to what those people are saying.

My friend distracted me. The Minister of Energy said, "What is the Eganville Leader saying?" I wish I'd brought the editorial from today's Eganville Leader. They're a lot tougher than I have just been.

**Mr Murdoch:** I was there and it wasn't that bad.

**Mr Conway:** On Saturday?



**Mr Murdoch:** Yes.

**Mr Conway:** If you were on Highway 17 on Saturday between Pembroke and Mattawa, I'll tell you, I want to introduce you to the person who wrote that piece in one of my papers today.

I guess it's also about the kind of service that we provide, not just in highway maintenance, but some of my constituents —

*Interjection.*

**Mr Conway:** Oh, the Canadian Tire is here careening its happy way around the back bench. I'm happy that you're happy, I say to the Canadian Tire.

I want to say something about health care, that my constituents, particularly in southwest Renfrew, are served, some of them, by the Peterborough hospital centre, and they're not very amused by what they were seeing last week in the public press about conditions at the Peterborough hospital centre.

1730

Today in Pembroke we have received the final report of the Health Services Restructuring Commission, and Noble Villeneuve stood up here today and said people have 30 days to make a point. I've got some news for people in Ottawa with the 30-day period: Three months after several people, the warden of Renfrew county, the mayor of Pembroke, hundreds, thousands of letters and petitions were sent, we get a final report. We have fewer beds in the final report than we had in the preliminary report three months ago. We have no movement on chronic care. They're taking the guts out of chronic care in Pembroke where we've already got a problem. There is absolutely no movement on any of the time lines, nothing. The Pembroke Civic Hospital is to be shut down within the year, actually now within 10 months.

I get all these wonderfully cold bureaucratic data in these documents and I look at one of the principal charts, and I lost it a bit the other day with the member for Northumberland — I'm sorry if I was overly vigorous — but I want to come back to that point. We're told in these reports, "You're a little high on home care and you're a little high on hospital separations." It's true, but let me just give you some of these data again.

Before any of the cuts, before the commission came into my part of rural, small-town, small-city eastern Ontario, before any of that, here's where we stood in Renfrew county. We are at about 80% of the provincial average on health expenditures. That's a fairly significant criterion. We're only at 80%. The average health expenditure per Ontarian is \$1,595, in Renfrew county it's \$1,273, so we are well below the average there.

**Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Environment and Energy):** That is what the average is.

**Mr Conway:** That's factored —

*Interjection.*

**Mr Conway:** On OHIP expenditures? That might not be a bad place to look as well. There the provincial average per capita is \$449; Renfrew county is \$258. Hospital and related facilities: Again we're below average and considerably below average. To be fair, some of that is going to be accounted for by virtue of the fact that some people, more than a few people, are provided for in

the Ottawa health centre, but when I look at these numbers —

**Mr Steve Gilchrist (Scarborough East):** Oh, the regional health centres.

**Mr Conway:** Yes, but I ask the House to bear with me. We are at 80% on categories like health expenditures; in other words, our folks are 80% of where the per capita average is there. On home care spending we're high, I admit that, but in three or four of the main categories we're well below the provincial average. Part of my frustration is that the commission, and more important, the government, are using criteria and tools that are skewed —

*Interjection.*

**Mr Conway:** The Canadian Tire has us believe that really the only difference between Rainy River and the Rouge River is weather. What do you do with someone like that? It is perhaps why he's so illustrious.

My point is that the government is using planning criteria that are unfair in terms of rural and small-town and northern Ontario. There's no doubt about that. It is not lost on me, for example, that when you compare the cuts in Thunder Bay, Sudbury and Renfrew county with some of the cuts elsewhere, it's very interesting. When I ask, as I continually do, "Give me, Minister, give me, government, a list of the hospitals in Ontario today that are currently meeting your bed standard," I get no list and I get no answer and I know why. There is no hospital in Ontario today that meets the hospital bed standard being used by the Sinclair commission and the Ontario Ministry of Health. As a representative from rural, small-town eastern Ontario I'm here to tell this House that we will not accept a planning standard that treats people unfairly in rural, small-town and northern Ontario. I believe we are getting the shaft by this policy and with these criteria.

I'm not at all surprised when the commission says, "We're not sure what's going on here." It is somewhat complex. I understand that. If I live in Belleville it is a different reality than if I live at Limerick Lake or up at Gilmour, at St Ola. I think too much of this place, too much of the bureaucratic world that runs this place, is anchored in places like Toronto, Ottawa, London and Hamilton. For them to understand the Cobdens, the Beachburgs, the Maynooths and the Roddens of the world is becoming a very difficult task.

I want to say in conclusion that what's happening in areas like health care and education to good, hardworking people in the communities of the Ottawa Valley is of very real concern, and no amount of ideology and no amount of rhetoric and no amount of government advertising is going to paper over that painful reality.

**Mr Marchese:** It's a pleasure for me to speak to this House calendar motion, because there's a lot to be said around this particular bill, there's a lot that this government is doing that we want to speak to and want the time to speak to.

We're not supporting this particular motion because the government is making radical changes to the structures of our public service without taking the time to listen to municipalities, public servants and citizens, and it continues to do that every day this Legislature sits. This



government is uncorking a bill every day. Every day this government, through Mike Harris and his boys over there, is uncorking yet another bill. It's going to take a big whack against every sector of the population in Ontario.

Let's look at education, for example, because the member for Halton Centre — and I've had the opportunity to be with him on several meetings around the whole issue of education — starts off by talking about education being the great equalizer. I agree with him that education can be the great equalizer, but under this government it is not. It does nothing to produce this kind of result that the members speak about. If you look at the policies and the actions of this government, you'll see that they do not produce that result it speaks about.

Look at junior kindergarten, which they have effectively cancelled in most boards in Ontario.

**Mr Gilchrist:** Oh, we cancelled it?

**Mr Marchese:** This government says, and a number of members on the other side say, "We've done it?"

**Mr Gilchrist:** The school boards cancelled it.

**Mr Marchese:** It's a wonderful thing to witness, because the government cuts back its funding and then they say to the boards, "But they're doing it, not us." In every sector that you can think of, this government cuts back funding and then it says: "We didn't do anything. It's either the municipality doing it or some of the boards of education doing it." That's not true. If you choke off the funding, somebody's going to suffer, right? If you choke off the funding, those poor boards of education won't have the money to be able to deliver those programs.

We've seen junior kindergarten, which can be an effective program to equalize opportunities for young people who do not have the same wealth of cultural capital that some others bring to succeed in the classroom — those individuals therefore are not given the same equality of condition and opportunity to succeed in their boards of education. Junior kindergarten, which could have been so effective at bringing about greater equality, has been effectively killed by this government, but they quite smugly say, "We didn't do it; somebody else has done it."

Look at continuing education, where they have cut the money. Continuing education is, or can be, a great equalizer for people who have not had the educational opportunities for a variety of reasons. They come back at a later date in their lives, getting back to education to get some of that experience they may not have had the opportunity to do when they were young, for a variety of reasons, for which we give no blame.

1740

What does this government do? When they have an opportunity to put more money into the system to help the people they have laid off, who through their policies are being laid off by the private sector, when they have an opportunity for adults to have better educational opportunities to find some work, they cut off the funding in the area of continuing education.

This government speaks about education being a great equalizer, but their practices, their policies in effect cutting away education funding, are not giving those people those opportunities.

Look at what they're doing around some other areas of property taxes. They have done something interesting. They have taken out of the property tax \$5.4 billion that goes to education, and they speak with great joy about giving homeowners an opportunity, seniors in particular, to have relief from property tax as it relates to educational purposes. But what have they done? They take \$5.4 billion out and they add, they say, another \$5.4 billion down to the municipalities, and they say, "Isn't this great?"

Well, there are two or three problems attached to this. First of all, when you took education out, you should have done the right thing. You should have replaced what you've taken out of the property tax with funding through an income tax system. But you didn't do that because you're too afraid to replace a regressive tax system with a progressive tax system. You would be too afraid to tell the public you would do that because they would have to pay higher income taxes. You couldn't do that. You couldn't raise their income taxes, could you? You could have done the right thing if you had done that.

What do you do? You take education out of property taxes and pretend you've done a great thing, and you say we are arriving at some revenue-neutral situation. Why in this world would you cause so much chaos to arrive at a revenue-neutral situation? Why would you cause such chaos in the system to arrive at a revenue-neutral situation?

**Mr Jim Flaherty (Durham Centre):** You guys made a lot of sense for 5 years: \$8 billion in interest payments.

**Mr Marchese:** It makes no sense, except — where it does make sense, Mr Lawyer, Monsieur l'avocat, is this: You are taking education out of the property tax system and exercising complete control of those dollars to be able to cut, I argue and predict, up to \$2 billion. That's why you're doing it. If that were not the agenda, it would be insanity to do otherwise. Most people would think you should be committed if you didn't have any other reason than to cut approximately \$2 billion out of the educational system.

Then the minister talks about improving education for our children. The guy doesn't know what he's talking about. They put a minister there who doesn't have a bloody clue about education, not one clue. If he did, he would speak to educational issues, but what does he do? This minister talks about how he's going to improve education for children, and what does he say? He says, "We're getting rid of politicians." That's a few millions. The Lord is merciful, a few millions are out, and now education is improved as a result?

He talks about duplication: "Oh, there's a lot of duplication." He doesn't say what that is; he just uses the word "duplication" as a gut feeling to reach to his Reform-minded friends. He doesn't have a clue what he's talking about.

**Mr Flaherty:** It's a couple of billion. We'll go and borrow it on Wall Street, like Bob Rae did, in American dollars at 7.5%. We'll be paying that back into the next century.

**The Acting Speaker:** Order. The member for Fort York has the floor, and I would ask those others to listen to the debate, learn from it and give him your respect.



**Mr Marchese:** The minister doesn't have a clue. He talks about administration being bloated. He knows that his Reform-minded friends and privileged, wealthy friends understand that, but if we were to talk about education as some of us understand it, he knows that educators and parents would laugh him out of his place.

**Mr Baird:** You represent Bay Street. Mr Bay Street.

**The Acting Speaker:** Order. I'd like to warn the member for Nepean. I won't warn you again.

**Mr Marchese:** Thank you, Mr Speaker. I appreciate the support. I know they're making great attempts to distract me on the other side, but it's not working. I can tell them that. All the Minister of Education does every time he's asked a question is say, "We are improving education," the poor man says. He doesn't explain how he does it, but his Reform-minded friends like the fact that he says, "The bureaucracy is bloated." That goes well with his friends, because they say, "Yes, it's bloated." They don't really know, but the minister plays into that because he has a sense of what people are feeling in their guts.

That's why he repeats that mantra of bloated bureaucracy, paying politicians too much, the perks of trustees. This poor man here, this Minister of Education, talks about the perks of some poor little trustee who's making \$10,000 or \$5,000 in some of those rural areas. Talk about perks; the perks are there with that ministry and with that Minister of Education. He's got control of the perks and he's attacking some poor trustee earning \$5,000 in some rural board about their perks.

What does this man, this Minister of Education, understand about education? Absolutely nothing. Ignorance is bliss on the other side. They joyfully travel into that blissful world of ignorance every day, in the front row, second row, third row and even the fourth. What do they know about education? I continue on this because people are worried. They want to reform the secondary school system. You know what? They're talking about this great reform as improving the quality of education in the secondary system.

I know the Minister of Education doesn't have a clue, but I'll help him out. They talk in this education reform about having a focus on science and technology. Think about this. Education is more than simply a focus on science and technology. We are humans made up of many components here. Science and technology is only one part of what we people are all about. A student should not be limited simply and/or solely to the idea of a focus on science and technology. If that is the focus of this government, perhaps they're trying to imitate or compete with Japan in this regard. I'm not sure. Perhaps that's what they're trying to do.

But we humans are made up of many parts. The humanities are a part of what we are. You cannot channel students into one area of study. You cannot do that. If that is what you do, you are pushing out other parts of what the educational system is all about, that the students want.

That is the focus of this secondary reform. He talks about increasing cooperative education without giving the resources to those poor boards, from which he's stripping dollars, to do more of that cooperative education. Boards

already do that and they spend a lot of money doing it. This government says, "We want to do more." Some boards say, "We wouldn't mind doing more, but we don't have the resources to."

**Mr Gilchrist:** Sure they do.

**Mr Marchese:** "Sure they do," says some member from Scarborough somewhere. They don't. They're stripping their budgets and then they say, "We want you to do more cooperative education." The poor boards are beleaguered, besieged every day by cuts and more cuts. This government says, "We want you to do more." The boards are saying, "We can't first of all find the employers to match the students, but secondly, if we could, we don't have the resources." The insanities of this government have to be understood very clearly, because people feel very afraid of what this government is doing.

1750

Then they come up with Bill 104. Again, what's in Bill 104? They're trying to amalgamate boards, particularly in Metro. They're going to eliminate a lot of trustees because they say this is good. They don't want politics any more in education — as if education were apolitical; as if nothing happens in a school that is political; as if when parents of black children and parents of so many other immigrant children scream about the fact that so many of their students are streamed into the vocational schools, that's not political.

**Mr John O'Toole (Durham East):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'm rather displeased with some of the comments by the speaker. First, he's not speaking to the motion before the House. Second, he's commenting on education as a former trustee who voted to double his wages when a trustee. He's also referring to Scarborough as "Scarborough somewhere."

**Mrs Boyd:** This is not a point of order, Speaker. You are allowing him to debate.

**The Acting Speaker:** Order. Speaking on the motion that is before the House is a point of order. I have been listening to the member for Fort York attentively, and I would ask him to continue.

**Mr Marchese:** The member for Durham East was himself a trustee and I've heard him speak on issues of education. The guy doesn't have a clue either. He was a trustee and he has no clue whatsoever of what he speaks. Why?

**Mrs Boyd:** In addition to the minister.

**Mr Marchese:** Well, the Minister of Education and Training doesn't have a clue, but I speak of another member.

**The Acting Speaker:** I would ask the member for Fort York to bring his comments into a parliamentary form. If you would address the remarks through the Speaker and temper them a little bit, I think we would all get along much better.

**Mr Marchese:** Mr Speaker, thank you for the multitude of interruptions I'm getting from you and the others.

I said that some members don't have a clue about education, and I'm speaking to that. Bill 104, the bill that many people are afraid of, is going to hurt a lot of people. They're at the hearings at this moment, very worried about what this bill does. This minister and his friends on the other side can go around saying: "We're



reducing the budget of a bloated administration, we're getting rid of a lot of trustees. They're going to make \$5,000." That's fine, but that's not going to help improve education one single bit. The agenda of this government is to cut billions out of education. That's what this is all about. When you take a few million dollars to fire some superintendents and to fire some trustees, you're left with the same problem in the educational system. That does nothing to improve the education of those children.

As a former teacher and as a school trustee, doing that on a full-time basis, we were working very closely, working daily very closely with parents, students and teachers, and we have a sense of what's going on in that classroom. We know what the agenda of this government is all about. We know that this government wants to cut approximately \$2 billion out of education.

If they reduce the budget of the Metropolitan Toronto board by 20%, in a school like Carleton Village, of the member Derwyn Shea from High Park, this is what it would mean to that member's school. If you go from the \$7,800 budget that student gets and cut it by 20%, which is the intent of this government, this is what it means: They would cut maintenance by 50%, a value of \$74,000; cut field trips by 50%, a value of \$3,597; cut furniture and equipment by 50%, \$3,675; cut supplies 10%, \$582; cut library supplies by 10%, \$762. It amounts to \$82,000. If they did that it's only \$82,000, and do you know what's left? The remaining shortfall is \$617,000.

**Mr Christopherson:** It can't be.

**Mr Marchese:** But it is. They have done the calculations school by school. On a 20% cut that's what it means. They still have a shortfall of \$617,000. Do you know where they're going to cut when they do that? Into the teachers. They're going to have to hire fewer teachers or eliminate some teachers. Think of what will happen to the class size.

I talked about issues that they say are non-classroom related: cutting maintenance, cutting field trips, which they say is non-classroom related, cutting furniture and equipment, supplies, and cutting library supplies.

**Mr Christopherson:** That's all not part of the classroom.

**Mr Marchese:** Not part of the classroom. We have a shortfall of \$617,000 remaining that has to be cut. And they talk about knowing what's happening. Mr O'Toole from Durham East talks to me about what we're talking about on this side. I know what they're talking about. They're talking about significant cuts that over 1,000 people wanted to speak to on Bill 104 and cannot be heard.

**Mr Christopherson:** Why?

**Mr Marchese:** Because they've reduced the time for those people to be heard. There's no room for them to be heard, for over 900 people who could not be accommodated. Why? Because this government says, "We're giving you plenty of time." Imagine this: Over 900 people want to be heard on this bill and can't. It's significant. You and the Premier and the others should be listening to that.

Moving on to amalgamation, Bill 103, we have had over 300 people come in front of this committee who have been moved by their desire to save their cities.

They're afraid of losing their cities, and they're right. I have been moved by their speeches, because each one of them was a poem. In my six years I have never seen so many individual deputants coming in front of a committee wanting to express their feelings around something they feel strongly about. We've often heard organizations that are touched by a particular bill, but I have never, ever seen and heard so many individuals coming from all over Metro stating an opinion about why it is they want to maintain their cities. It has moved me. It has touched me a great deal.

There's been no evidence this is going to save money; there's no proof. This government has offered no proof except Monsieur Leach and his gut feeling that somehow they're going to save money, he and his parliamentary assistant and all the others going around with their gut feeling that it's going to save money, but there is no research that supports these people in their desire to amalgamate all the cities in Metro, none whatsoever.

We had a brilliant presentation made by Beth Moore Milroy, professor of urban and regional planning. She says, "Go to the studies that teach about the local human scale," because all this is about saving money, all this is about helping people like the Urban Development Institute, which deputed in front of the committee and said: "Please amalgamate. This is great for us." Developers love it because it saves them time. They don't have to go to each individual city when they have a development issue or a planning issue. They want to go to just one government. It's good for developers and these people help the developers.

This professor says: "Go to the studies that teach about the local human scale. That is the scale of which people can understand their surroundings and of which they believe they can have an effect on their milieu. Understanding and believing in one's efficacy brings out energy, caring, innovation and dedication. Take away the capacity to grasp and to have a say in what is going on and people stop paying attention; the city debilitates. So the right scale feeds efficacy, efficacy feeds caring and caring feeds the city, and around we go again in reinforcing this circle."

She's absolutely right. They are failing to understand that the human scale is what's being lost, that public involvement is being sacrificed to give a break to their developer friends. That's what it's about.

Mr Cox, another researcher, says, "Smaller governments are more accountable, smaller governments are more responsive, smaller local governments are more attuned to communities and neighbourhoods and larger governments are more susceptible to special interests."

By that he means developers, who have the money to be able to influence this new megacity. Those are the larger interests they're trying to protect. It's for them that this government speaks and it's them this government serves. They're not serving the public interest; they're serving the interests of developers and their other rich, privileged buddies. That's what this is all about.

Deputation after deputation of individual testimony has spoken against this, and this government is not going to listen. The referendum which Bill 86 permits — this bill they passed in December permits municipalities to have



a referendum any time during their mandate. But this government says, "Oh no, it's just a mere public opinion poll; it isn't a referendum." But they're wrong, and if they don't listen to the public on this, anger in this city will build unlike any they have ever seen before.

Mr Speaker, we've arrived at 6 o'clock, the hour to adjourn, so I move adjournment of the House.

**The Acting Speaker:** Further debate? Mr Johnson has moved notice of motion number 51. Is it the wish of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

I declare the motion carried.

It now being 6 o'clock, the House stands adjourned until 1:30 of the clock tomorrow afternoon.

*The House adjourned at 1801.*

## ERRATUM

No.	Page	Column
1167	7149	1

### At line 38 insert:

The government announcement to transfer the responsibility of land ambulance service, public health, long-term care and social services to the municipalities is causing the association grave concern. These hospitals are directly involved in the provision of some of these services and have close affiliation with the provision of others.



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**Legislative Assembly  
of Ontario**

First Session, 36th Parliament

**Assemblée législative  
de l'Ontario**

Première session, 36<sup>e</sup> législature

**Official Report  
of Debates  
(Hansard)**

**Journal  
des débats  
(Hansard)**

**Wednesday 26 February 1997**

**Mercredi 26 février 1997**

**Speaker**  
Honourable Chris Stockwell

**Président**  
L'honorable Chris Stockwell

**Clerk**  
Claude L. DesRosiers

**Greffier**  
Claude L. DesRosiers



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# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 26 February 1997

# ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 26 février 1997

*The House met at 1333.  
Prayers.*

## MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

### FAMILY SUPPORT PLAN

**Mrs Elinor Caplan (Orillia):** Once again this government is ignoring the most vulnerable in our society by refusing to take action.

Ms Price, a constituent of mine, has been trying to collect support payments from her ex-husband since July 1995. After numerous court appearances and promises of payment, Ms Price has not received any money from her ex.

On February 18, 1997, she found herself before a judge yet again, who ordered her ex-husband to pay \$3,000 within seven days or he was going to jail, the judge said. Monday, February 24, was the seventh day and Ms Price had received no money. When she called the family support plan, they were only able to say that no money had been received.

Mr Price has been ordered to pay support numerous times and he has not done so. He has been told that if he did not comply with the court order, he would be sent to jail. He has not served a single day.

I'm asking the Premier to intervene and ensure that his Attorney General and his Solicitor General take action in this situation. Deadbeat dads feel they don't have to pay support order payments because there are no penalties if they don't comply.

Ms Price and her children are desperate. They have no place to turn. They are asking only for what is rightfully theirs. I'm asking this government and this Premier to intervene on behalf of her and all parents who are not receiving support payments.

### COURT RULING

**Mr Tony Silipo (Dovercourt):** In light of yesterday's ruling against the trustees in Bill 103, the Minister of Municipal Affairs seems intent on still trying to ignore the importance of that ruling.

He is quoted as saying today, "We have stated on numerous occasions...the trustees do not have any jurisdiction until such time as the legislation is passed." Of course he also said, as the judge in the case himself quoted in his judgement, as the trustees' "right to examine municipal decisions will be retroactive to the date this legislation was introduced" it is "in everyone's interests to cooperate with them."

Clearly the Minister of Municipal Affairs was trying to have it both ways and the judge in the case found exactly to that effect, because the justice went on to find and to say: "As a practical matter the municipal councils must conform now to the legislative scheme of an act not yet in force. If these orders in council were allowed to stand, the government would be allowed to do indirectly what it cannot do directly."

That is wrong. The justice found it to be wrong. The Minister of Municipal Affairs would do well to understand that it was wrong and he should adhere to that.

### AL SMITH

**Mr Allan K. McLean (Simcoe East):** I solemnly rise in the House today to recognize the services of a citizen of this province. Orillia alderman Al Smith passed away last Friday evening. Cam Jackson, minister responsible for seniors' issues, and I paid our respects on behalf of the people of Ontario at yesterday's funeral services.

Al Smith is best known to the members of this House as president of the United Senior Citizens of Ontario. He was a persistent advocate for seniors in this province, lobbying on their behalf both the federal and provincial governments.

Mr Smith was an initial supporter of the Canada-US Games and was made an honorary citizen of Auburn, New York. Al Smith was an avid outdoor sportsman, member of many service clubs and also the conservation club in Orillia.

He was first elected to Orillia council in 1975 and served for 22 unbroken years, longest in the history of the city of Orillia. Mr Smith was also actively involved in several community service clubs. A local newspaper described Al Smith as a "feisty alderman who never gave in to despair."

On behalf of the members, I send sympathy to Al's wife, Marie, and family. Ontario has lost a courageous citizen.

### VIDEO LOTTERY TERMINALS

**Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex South):** The recently announced mini-casino initiative by the Harris government will begin the first wave of video slot machines — over 6,000, in fact.

These machines are well-known to be highly addictive and are considered the crack cocaine of gambling. They're also the prime target of a grass-roots rebellion against gaming that has started in the west. The town of Rocky Mountain House overwhelmingly decided they don't want VLTs in their community. Similar referenda and plebiscites are planned for dozens of other commun-



ities in Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta. In every case, communities are saying the same thing: Governments have gone too far by introducing these insidious little machines.

If this slot machine scheme was really about obtaining better funding for charities, why is the government prepared to take some \$730 million from slot machines alone in this mini-casino scheme, while it's content to give the charities only \$180 million? That's four times less than the government's share.

The trend in this country is towards eliminating slot machines, not increasing them. Not only have the Premier and his government thrown out their conscience on this issue, but they've broken their promise on referenda for communities. It's clear that the Mike Harris government has become the biggest addict to gaming in this country.

### SCHOOL BOARDS

**Mr Len Wood (Cochrane North):** Last week I met with CUPE members, teachers and parents who are not only deeply concerned about Bill 104 but feel this government is deliberately hiding the real agenda behind this legislation.

What we know is that the unelected and unaccountable Education Improvement Commission set up by this legislation will make recommendations on how to promote and facilitate the outsourcing of non-instructional services of school boards.

What this really means is that a large number of school workers, including workers responsible for caretaking, daycare, payroll, maintenance and lunchtime activity programs, will see their jobs privatized. We all know companies that will take over these jobs will not pay the fair wages, benefits and job security that these workers have won through decades of collective bargaining.

1340

If workers from sectors other than school boards think this will not happen to them, think twice. The blueprint will be used for municipalities and health care workers right across this province.

Citizens and taxpayers of this province have every reason to be worried by a plan that will eliminate good jobs and that will lead to reduced access to services for our children. They have every reason to be worried, because this government has a hidden agenda. Since January we have seen the Premier on TV ads promoting his education reform and asking the population to call a toll-free number to find out more about their plan. Guess what? I did call and was told that the package would not be ready before the beginning of April. What a coincidence. This education reform package will be available only after Bill 104 hearings are over and done with.

### ONTARIO-QUEBEC MEMBERS' HOCKEY GAME

**Mr Jim Brown (Scarborough West):** Hockey unites Canadians. Hockey cuts across all differences. The competition, the rituals of the game, diffuse differences in both the players and the fans. That's what happened last weekend when members of provincial Parliament from Quebec and Ontario vied for hockey supremacy.

There's not a game more thrilling than the Montreal Canadiens playing the Toronto Maple Leafs. But almost as thrilling was the two-game series between the Ontario Legiskaters and the members of the National Assembly of Quebec. Toronto beat Montreal, and Ontario beat Quebec. The Quebec members were most gracious hosts, losing 13-10 at the Molson Centre and losing again 8-5 at Pierrefonds.

The stellar coaching by Quebec Premier Lucien Bouchard couldn't keep pace with Ontario's coaching staff of Gary Fox, Gary Leadston and Bob McAllister. Referee Daniel Johnson was generally impartial, although a two-minute penalty for a Conservative playing left wing is a dubious call.

Premier Mike Harris got a goal and an assist, Minister Hodgson led the series in scoring and Minister Johnson led the series in body-checks and penalties. Speaker Stockwell took one for the team when he separated his shoulder and continued to play. Goaltender Gary Carr was spectacular, stopping about 500 shots.

Both teams thanked organizers MPP Morley Kells and MNA Russ Williams.

On behalf of the Ontario MPP Legiskaters, I want to thank our gracious hosts from the Quebec National Assembly and the Montreal Canadiens. We'd like to invite Quebec legislators to Toronto for another exciting series for hockey supremacy. In the meantime, we'll be gracious champions.

### EDUCATION FINANCING

**Mrs Lyn McLeod (Fort William):** The Minister of Education commissioners are already out talking about outsourcing, privatizing things like school custodial care and school secretaries. The commissioners are hearing how concerned people are about this idea, and the committee holding hearings on the minister's Bill 104 has heard from hosts of parents who stressed the importance of the school secretary and custodian to the safety and the wellbeing of their children.

But now the minister's cohorts in the Ministry of Municipal Affairs are going in a totally different direction. It seems that they want to dump all school construction, maintenance, secretarial staff, bussing and who knows what else on municipalities.

This government has made a huge mess with mega-dumping, and now it wants to try to fix the problem by creating an even bigger mess. This is a \$2.8-billion dump at the very least. It is an abandonment of the government's responsibility to provide good school buildings, and the Minister of Education knows how many new schools have to be built to replace hundreds of portables and how many schools are literally falling apart.

But even more than that, this would mean a huge loss of jobs and the disruption of hundreds of lives. It would be a huge loss for kids, because schools will be divided in half, with multiple employers, dial-a-cleaners and drop-in secretaries.

This government cannot fix the mess it has created by making another one. Why don't they just admit they have made a huge mistake with mega-dump and scrap the whole idea?



EMPLOYEE WAGE PROTECTION

**Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre):** I want to respond to statements that the Minister of Labour made on Monday of this week, where she said, "At the present time, workers across Canada do not have secured creditor status under the federal Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act." She went on to say, "I regret to inform you that the federal government will not be making any changes to the legislation, and so unfortunately our workers will not be protected and they will not have preferred status."

It's for that reason that in 1991 our government, under Labour Minister Bob Mackenzie, brought in the employee wage protection plan, retroactive to 1990, to deal with the thousands of workers who were being thrown out of work as a result of the free trade agreement and the ongoing recession. That provided workers with an ability to claim for wages, vacation, severance and termination pay that they were entitled to. It was this government, under Bill 7, that took away the right of those very workers to claim for termination and severance pay and reduced their ability to claim from \$5,000 to \$2,000.

That's what you did in terms of workers who are facing bankruptcy, and you have the audacity to stand in your place as a minister of the crown, as a minister of the Harris government, and blame the feds. You gutted that program that provided for workers, and unfortunately we're awaiting the other shoe to drop when you take away the rest of the plan so you can take \$20 million more.

MATCH DE HOCKEY ENTRE DÉPUTÉS  
DES ASSEMBLÉES DU QUÉBEC  
ET DE L'ONTARIO

**M. Marcel Beaubien (Lambton) :** Le 21 février, au Centre Molson à Montréal, les députés de l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario ont remporté une victoire de 13 à 10 contre les députés de l'Assemblée nationale du Québec. Cette victoire ne s'agissait pas d'une ronde constitutionnelle mais bien d'un match de hockey amical.

L'accueil chaleureux des membres de l'Assemblée nationale du Québec, des représentants du club de hockey Canadiens et du Centre Molson était extraordinaire. Un gros merci aussi à l'entraîneur de l'équipe du Québec. Le premier ministre, Lucien Bouchard, a finalement dû avouer que sa stratégie secrète n'avait pas donné le résultat auquel il s'attendait.

La stratégie de l'équipe ontarienne était d'avoir le premier ministre, Mike Harris, jouer sur l'aile gauche. Ayant beaucoup de difficultés avec cette position, on le retrouvait souvent, sans qu'il ne s'en rende compte, sur l'aile droite. Cette stratégie a eu un résultat positif pour le premier ministre Harris, car c'est sur cette aile qu'il a compté un but.

En conclusion, j'aimerais bien remercier le député d'Etobicoke-Lakeshore, M. Morley Kells, et son équipe, qui ont travaillé d'arrache-pied pour s'assurer du succès de la fin de semaine, et ce sans l'utilisation des deniers publics.

C'est avec fierté que l'Ontario sera à la hauteur du défi pour accueillir avec autant d'hospitalité à Toronto des

membres de l'Assemblée nationale pour un autre jeu l'année prochaine.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY  
AND RESPONSES

GOVERNMENT AGENCIES REVIEW

**Hon David Johnson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Government House Leader):** I'm pleased to announce that today Ontario is moving to improve service and reduce costs in its regulatory and adjudicative agencies. We will act on the recommendations released today in the third and final report of the Government Task Force on Agencies, Boards and Commissions, chaired by London South MPP Bob Wood.

Mr Wood has outlined a plan to produce an administrative justice system which is more streamlined, responsive and efficient. I want to commend Mr Wood and his task force for the excellent work they have done in identifying improvements in the very important agency sector.

The task force recommendations, to combine 35 regulatory and adjudicative agencies with similar client bases and mandates, to eliminate five agencies whose mandates are now obsolete and to streamline hearings procedures, will allow us to create a simpler, better coordinated and more service-oriented tribunal system for the people of Ontario. The redesigned system will mean better service and less red tape for individuals and businesses who are awaiting a decision by one of these agencies.

As you will recall, I'm sure, the task force report on the first phase, unveiled in May 1996, made recommendations concerning 50 government advisory agencies. The report on the second phase, which was released in January, examined 62 operational agencies. The government target is to save \$220 million in taxpayers' dollars by March 1998 from the agencies, boards and commissions. Already we have identified \$80 million in savings.

Regulatory and adjudicative agencies are independent bodies which operate at arm's length from the government. Of the 79 agencies examined by the task force, 19 were regulatory, 37 adjudicative and 23 combining both roles.

1350

The task force made the following recommendations: five agencies be eliminated because their mandates are obsolete; 10 agencies are no longer needed because their functions can be delivered through other levels of government, the private sector or self-management; 35 agencies that deal with similar subjects, clients and decision-making procedures be consolidated into 10 larger agencies which will ensure continued access to the required base of expertise while at the same time reducing duplication and overlap; 26 agencies be retained in their current or a restructured form. Three agencies are currently undergoing broader review, and decisions will be deferred on them.

In addition to agency-specific recommendations, the task force also made sector-wide recommendations which



will modernize and strengthen the delivery of administrative justice to the public.

Based on these recommendations, the government will be pursuing three reforms through a working group that will include agency participation. These three reforms are: simplifying and standardizing agency hearing procedures; coordinating and rationalizing the delivery of common services; and finally, requiring agencies to manage their performance and outcomes in a publicly accountable manner.

In conclusion, I believe this redesigned system will maintain the special expertise critical to ensuring sound regulatory and adjudicative decision-making while at the same time reducing delays and resulting in lower costs and better administrative justice service to the businesses and individuals in Ontario.

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Responses. The official opposition, member for Windsor-Sandwich.

**Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor-Sandwich):** The people of Ontario will always welcome a review when a review is to look at ways to do better. The Ontario public will always be supportive of that. If this review, in particular certain areas of delivery of government services, is simply disguised in order to privatize certain segments, reduce wages and put people on the street, that is not going to be acceptable to the people of Ontario. A tax cut will do absolutely nothing for people who are no longer working or for people who are making significantly less.

I turn your attention to something that affects all of us in the House, in this precinct of Queen's Park, our housekeeping services, an area of general service delivery under review by this minister and through these various reviews. This is a particular group, the housekeeping services, for the majority of whom English is not their first language and whose average age is over 50. Some have over 20 years of civil service experience here, working for you, Minister. I see this as simply an attempt to offload them to some private company, to the highest bidder. That is not acceptable.

My colleague would like to go further with other areas.

**Mr Monte Kwinter (Wilson Heights):** I have no problem with the government taking a look at these various agencies and restructuring them in the interests of more efficiency. But I can tell you that the experience this government has had to date hasn't been that great. All we have to do is look at the efforts of the Attorney General and what he had to do with the family support program, which was supposed to be more efficient. As you know, it is a total disaster.

There are a couple of areas that have been targeted for elimination. I find one particularly disturbing and that is the Environmental Compensation Corp, in which the rationale is to relieve the taxpayers of the burden of compensation at the same time as this government is actually weakening environmental protection and is exposing citizens of this province to greater environmental hazards, yet the government is trying to distance itself from that responsibility.

I have other problems with some of the programs, and one has to do with the whole area of the Pay Equity Commission, where the statement says, "The government

remains committed to supporting the principle of pay equity," but having said that, they want to explore other ways to deliver the remaining work of the commission. I would suggest to you that you find the other ways first before you announce that you're going to eliminate this particular commission, because as you know, pay equity is certainly an area that requires a great deal of attention.

I'm also curious to know the rationale behind the Ontario Provincial Police Grievance Board, about which you state: "The work of the board is necessary, but does not need to be delivered by an agency. The task force recommends eliminating the board and exploring other ways of delivering the service." That thread runs throughout this report where they announce, "We think you should get rid of these areas which are trouble areas for the province and explore other ways of doing it."

I suggest that before you announce you're going to eliminate these things, you come up with an alternative so that at least there can be some public discussion by those people who are going to be impacted by these particular initiatives to make sure that in fact the alternative is better than what is there at the present time. I think that is absolutely critical.

There's another one where they're going to deliver through another means, and that's the Public Service Grievance Board. The recommendation is that "the board be eliminated and other ways explored for delivering the service, including increasing the opportunities for private sector involvement." I suggest to you that is code for absolutely outsourcing, contracting out, and I think that again is an area that should be very carefully explored before the announcement is made.

There are areas that without doubt have outlived their usefulness. I think it's important that we try to rationalize these things. On the other hand, it's absolutely critical that we make sure that before we shut something down, we have something that is in place that is going to absolutely do the job it's supposed to do and that we don't put some of these programs at risk for the sole reason of trying to get some fiscal savings.

**Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River):** The Chair of Management Board's announcement today is remarkable in the sense that he wants to try to say to the public that he's going to save some money, but he very deliberately avoids telling people where the hits are going to be. He very deliberately avoids saying here today what areas of administrative law, what people, what institutions are going to be sacrificed to finance his tax scheme for his wealthy friends. Fortunately, we have a list of the areas that are going to be hit.

Let's look at the area of health. We know the government is vulnerable for health. We know this government wants to offload a lot of health care services on to municipalities and on to the municipal property tax. We know this government is closing hospitals and cutting hospital-at-home for the aged budgets, and this government knows that they're going to be all sorts of implementation problems. It knows it's going to have a lot of unhappy people out there who can't get the health care services they need and deserve.

What's the government going to do to make sure those people are shut out? Well, the Health Facilities Appeal



Board is going to either disappear or be shoved to the side. The Health Protection Appeal Board, the Health Services Appeal Board, the Laboratory Review Board, the Nursing Homes Review Board — Ah, yes, create chaos in the health care system, deprive people of the health care they need, but then deprive them of any means they have of having their issues addressed. That's what this is about.

Let's turn to the environment. We know this government doesn't give a hoot about the environment. The Premier says it's okay for the government to be figuring out legal defences when members of the public come to sue the government for not enforcing their own environmental laws.

If that sounds a bit like Mexico, it's exactly like Mexico. Mexico passes the environmental laws and then does away with any possibility of enforcing them. That's where this government is headed, only instead of putting their emphasis on enforcement, they're going to figure out unique legal defences to defend themselves from the public when the public wants to know why our environmental laws are not being enforced.

So the government brings in another step. On the environment, they're going to do away with the Environmental Appeal Board, the Environmental Assessment Board including the Niagara Escarpment.

We see here that health and the environment are going to help pay for this government's tax scheme for its wealthy friends.

1400

But it goes further. The Environmental Compensation Corp: The government knows it's going to have a problem with all those members of the public who become angry and become concerned about the fact that their water, their land, their air is being polluted, and they're going to go after compensation, so the government's going to strike that off too.

Let's go down a little further. Ah, yes, the Pay Equity Commission. We already heard in the government's famous red tape report that it believes women who work in workplaces with 100 employees or less should get lower wages. This government already believes the Pay Equity Act should not apply in workplaces of 100 employees or less, so what is it going to do to facilitate that? They're going to do away with the Pay Equity Commission. They don't want the commission there to enforce pay equity. This government believes women should pay for their tax scheme for the wealthy and they're doing everything they can to ensure that happens.

The Ontario Human Rights Commission: This one's interesting. We already know from their red tape report that they want to totally turn around the Ontario Human Rights Commission. They want to put all of the emphasis on the victim. The victim will have to go out and hire their own lawyer, their own private investigator. The commission will not do anything to help them. The government's sensitive to that, so what do they say here? They're going to defer, for more study, the Ontario Human Rights Commission. People should not take any false sense of security in that. That is on the hit list as well.

Yes, the government's going to find some money for its tax scheme, but it's going to find it at the expense of

people who need health care, at the expense of the environment, at the expense of low-paid women, and ultimately at the expense of human rights. Shameful.

## SPEAKER'S RULINGS

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** On Thursday, February 20, 1997, the member for Nepean (Mr Baird) rose on a point of privilege concerning the wording of a pamphlet produced by NDP caucus services.

The member was concerned about a specific statement in the pamphlet which states that: "The Harris Conservatives have downloaded more than \$500 million in costs for services on to Metro. As a result, we will see services cut and property taxes rise dramatically."

I have to say to the member for Nepean that I cannot find a relationship between that statement and any particular parliamentary proceeding currently before this House. While the member has made an argument that the statement is somehow related to Bill 103, as far as I can determine, it deals with matters that are in fact not contained in that particular piece of legislation.

It is even impossible for me to know whether the policies referred to in this statement would be done through legislation or regulation.

The member himself stated that in his judgement the House has not debated one single bill with respect to the statement in question. In contrast, the subject of my ruling of January 22 clearly related to a proceeding of this House.

Therefore, I find there is no prima facie case of privilege or contempt.

In closing, I want to take this opportunity to advise all members of the House to reflect carefully on the wording used in such documents and to suggest that the Board of Internal Economy may wish to review its policy with respect to publications paid for by caucus services.

Yesterday the member for Oakwood (Mr Colle) raised a point of privilege relating to a recent court decision on Bill 103; the member for Dovercourt (Mr Silipo) and leader of the third party (Mr Hampton) raised similar points.

Before I deal with the specifics of the points raised, I want to address the issue of the jurisdiction of the Speaker.

It must be understood that as Speaker, I am restricted to ruling on matters of a parliamentary or procedural nature and not on questions of legality or constitutional-ity.

This is the view held by previous Speakers in this House and in other parliaments throughout the Commonwealth. It is a view shared by the parliamentary authorities.

Citation 168(5) at page 49 of Beauchesne reads as follows:

"The Speaker will not give a decision upon a constitutional question nor decide a question of law, though the same may be raised on a point of order or privilege."

In full awareness of these restrictions, let me deal with the concerns raised.

Members contended that the stance of the agent of the Attorney General in the court case respecting Bill 103



may be seen as contemptuous of this House by claiming royal prerogative and thereby diminishing the role of this House.

This is not the first time in the history of this House that members have objected to a submission that an Attorney General had made in a court of law. However, I have not found anything in my research that stands as an authority for the proposition that such submissions can raise a matter of order or privilege in this House.

The Attorney General is the chief law officer of the province and is empowered under the Ministry of the Attorney General Act, an act duly passed by this Legislature, and it is not for the Speaker to define the limitations to be placed on the Attorney General's authority.

It would be very unusual, to say the least, for a Speaker to in effect pass judgement on such submissions that form part of the core function of the Attorney General.

Now, as to the assertion of some members that the appointment and actions of the trustees were carried out before passage of Bill 103 and therefore constitute contempt, I will remind members of my January 28 ruling on this issue, at which time I stated that "there is a legal issue involved in this course of action, however, and the Speaker cannot rule on the legality of the provisions contained in legislation or the actions of a government. These would be matters for the courts to decide." I think that events have unfolded which have borne that decision out. It does not now, by virtue of a legal decision, somehow become a procedural issue.

The member for Dovercourt in his submission yesterday argued that the Speaker should take certain actions in light of the court decision. I want to respond by saying to the member that his comments might more properly be directed to the government.

Also yesterday, the member for Fort William (Mrs McLeod) raised a point of order asserting that certain provisions in Bill 104 are similar to the provisions in Bill 103 that were the subject of the recent court ruling and suggesting that the Speaker should therefore take some action. The member for Dovercourt (Mr Silipo), the member for Oriole (Mrs Caplan), the member for Algoma (Mr Wildman) and the Minister of Education all made submissions on this point.

I am going to begin by reiterating what I said yesterday. It is not within the authority of the Speaker to decide on a legal issue. I am not a judge and this is not a courtroom. Regardless of how close a parallel you see between the two pieces of legislation, the question of the legality of Bill 104 is a determination that rests with the courts and the courts alone.

In this regard, I want to refer the member to a decision rendered in the House of Commons of Canada.

On May 2, 1989, Speaker Fraser delivered a ruling following arguments that provisions of the Financial Administration Act were unconstitutional and therefore the bill should be ruled out of order, arguments that I found to be similar to those raised by the member for Fort William. Speaker Fraser stated the following:

"The Speaker should not sit in judgement on constitutional or legal matters. That role belongs more properly to the courts and the administration of justice."

Speaker Fraser concluded by stating that "the government has respected all of the procedures required by the House." The same can be said in the case of Bill 104. The procedures of the House have been followed. Fundamentally, there is nothing out of order.

It's time for oral questions.

**Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines):** Mr Speaker, can I get a point of clarification on your ruling?

**The Speaker:** A brief clarification? Can we save this clarification? Because really it's neither a point of order or privilege, and there's nothing in the rule book that talks about clarification.

**Mr Bradley:** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Is what you're saying then that despite the fact that the government — and this is a point of order, because I want to find out what the Speaker really means here — is moving where the courts say they are moving illegally, there is nothing we in this House can do to prevent the government from moving forward with legislation which the courts say is illegal? Is that what you're saying?

**The Speaker:** That's really not a point of order. What I'm saying simply is this: It's not up to me as Speaker to decide what is legal and what is illegal. That is up to the courts to decide, and obviously, if it's deemed to be illegal, then the government would have to follow the law of the land. That's the catch.

1410

## ORAL QUESTIONS

### HOSPITAL RESTRUCTURING

**Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition):** My question is for the Minister of Health. Today I want to speak to you in your capacity as the chief advocate for the protection of patient care in Ontario hospitals. I don't want to talk to you as the deputy minister, I don't want to talk to you about programs and policies and restructuring and billions of dollars; I want to talk to you about your role as an advocate for quality patient care in Ontario hospitals.

In that capacity you should understand that you can't cut \$1.3 billion from hospitals and not affect the quality of patient care. You should understand that your actions are leading to the layoff of 15,000 Ontario nurses. You can't do that and not affect the quality of patient care.

We have raised with you a number of horror stories. We have raised those because they're in connection with the result of your first \$365 million in hospital cuts. Notwithstanding that, you are bent on proceeding with a further \$935 million in cuts. Do you understand that by your actions you are creating a health care crisis in Ontario?

**Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Health):** What would be wrong is to continue what has been going on for a number of years in the health care system, and that is to spend too much money on administration, on in many cases half-empty hospital buildings, on maintenance —

**Mrs Elinor Caplan (Oriole):** Nurses are not administration.

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Member for Oriole, come to order. I want the House to be somewhat



more orderly than yesterday. I would ask the members to allow the minister to answer.

**Hon Mr Wilson:** What we have seen — because we're the last province to restructure our hospital system and our health system in a comprehensive way — from all the other provinces, from governments of different political stripes covering the spectrum, is an improvement of health care services across the country, and it's time Ontario improved the system.

We have not removed \$1.3 billion from hospitals. We are in the process of reinvesting every dollar that we've seen in savings so far from hospitals back into the health care system, including hospitals. Today our reinvestments far exceed in dollar amounts anything we've seen in savings from the system to date.

**Mr McGuinty:** Your job is to address the very serious problem of patient care in hospitals today. It's not to stand there and talk in some kind of a rarefied and abstract way about restructuring and what you're going to do in the future. Patients are suffering today, now, in Ontario hospitals.

Even your own experts say your cuts are not realistic in a three-year time frame. They say it's going to further hurt patient care, and your own hospital hatchet man, Duncan Sinclair, says your cuts are making him close hospitals first and figure out what replaces them later.

You won't listen to us; you're obviously not prepared to listen to patients who put their stories through us into this House. Will you not at least listen to your own experts, who tell us that you are hurting patients in this province?

**Hon Mr Wilson:** When the honourable member's party was in government in this province, and the previous government, just slightly under 10,000 hospital beds were closed. What previous governments failed to do was to reduce the administration then and to amalgamate those hospital buildings into fewer buildings.

We will have fewer hospital buildings in the province but we'll have more nurses, modern technologies, the newest drug therapies and greater access and higher-quality services in the buildings that remain. That is the goal of Dr Duncan Sinclair and the Health Services Restructuring Commission.

They are guided by the principles of improved quality, greater access and, yes, sustained affordability of the system, because many more people in the next few years will become senior citizens. They're going to require more hospital care and more health care and we're preparing the system for that inevitability while looking after today's patients.

The fact that your party and members from time to time bring up individual cases that point out problems in the system speaks volumes to me, and I think to the people of Ontario, that the system has to change. We have to learn from those problems and we have to work —

**The Speaker:** Thank you, Minister. Final supplementary, leader of the official opposition.

**Mr McGuinty:** Your job is to lend comfort to Ontario's sick today. Your job is to reassure them that you will protect their right to quality health care. Far from reassuring them, Ontario patients and their loved

ones are frightened of having to either stay in or visit an Ontario hospital. Health care is an extremely important issue, as you well recognize, and many people were induced to vote for your government because of an assurance that the Premier provided on province-wide TV during a debate. I want to repeat what he said. He said, "Certainly I can guarantee you it's not my plan to close hospitals." That is what your leader said.

So far, you've closed 10 hospitals. There are at least 18 others on the immediate chopping block, and we could very well end up with one third of Ontario hospitals being closed as a result of your policies. Just today you closed three more in London and you've stolen, on top of that, 70 million of their health care dollars.

Minister, will you admit today that it is your cuts that are causing the patient care —

**The Speaker:** Thank you very much. Minister of Health.

**Hon Mr Wilson:** This government has not cut one penny of health care. The fact of the matter is, the budget is up significantly, and certainly at the level of \$17.7 billion, it's some \$700 million more than what the Liberals promised in their red book.

I think the honourable member has a lot of audacity to try and lecture this government about health care and about health care spending when it's your federal cousins, Mr Chrétien and Mr Martin, who have cut our health care transfers —

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker:** Order. Minister, just a minute. Minister.

**Hon Mr Wilson:** I would remind people that the facts speak for themselves in this debate. The federal government has cut us some \$2 billion in health and social service transfers. We've had to cut many, many other things in government. There used to be about 30 cabinet ministers; there's 19 now. We got rid of our pensions. We've cut other ministries dramatically and we've put more money into health care because our goal is to have a more efficient, more accessible, modern health care system with the newest technologies to ensure that people are well served into the future.

**The Speaker:** New question. Leader of the official opposition.

**Mr McGuinty:** The question is for the Minister of Health again. A short time ago I received a letter from Mr Keith Cooper, a 32-year-old man from St Catharines. He was involved in a car accident in January of this year. He was rushed by ambulance to the Joseph Brant Hospital in Burlington, and there he lay on a hard backboard for several hours before being seen by a doctor. When he was seen, he was told that the hospital did not have the necessary diagnostic equipment and that it would be necessary to transfer him to another hospital for those purposes.

He stayed in a hospital bed for three days, in pain and not knowing what his injuries were, before being transferred. An Ontario patient in an Ontario hospital lay in a bed for three days after suffering severe injuries in a car accident, not knowing what he was suffering from and not having any diagnosis and not even having any commencement of treatment.

**The Speaker:** Question?



**Mr McGuinty:** How could this possibly happen on your watch?

**Hon Mr Wilson:** The fact that from time to time we have individual cases raised that point out problems in our health care speaks volumes for the need to restructure. If we had fewer and more efficient hospital buildings, we would actually be able to concentrate more services, more nurses, modern technology in those remaining hospitals. That's the consensus of the health care community, it's the consensus of the commission and it's the consensus of all of the experts who give this government advice and give your party advice, frankly, on health care.

That's what we're trying to do. We're trying to do it as quickly as possible so at the end of the day we have that modern technology available and when people see the blue H on the highway and they pull into one of our hospitals, it's not like what you did with closed emergency wards in Shelburne and throughout the province or 18-hour emergency wards rather than 24-hour emergency wards, but that they're full-service —

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker:** Member for Windsor-Sandwich, I'm warning you to come to order; the member for Hamilton East as well. Minister.

**Hon Mr Wilson:** — but that that blue H stands for a full-service, modern hospital with the latest technologies and the highest quality health care available in the world today.

**Mr McGuinty:** When it comes to improving health care in Ontario, your cure is worse than the disease.

This is what happened to Keith Cooper when he was finally transferred to another hospital: He was diagnosed as having shattered vertebrae and he was told he would require five hours of surgery to clean out the shattered bone and replace that bone with other bone from his hip. Throughout it all, he was in intense pain.

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On the first day that his surgery was scheduled, it was rescheduled four times before being cancelled. On the second day, it was scheduled and rescheduled five times before being cancelled. On the third day — this is the sixth day since the car accident; this man has yet to be treated. On the sixth day he received the surgery after it was rescheduled two more times. Six days after breaking his back in a car accident in Ontario, a patient is finally treated at an Ontario hospital.

In his letter, Keith talks about it taking over an hour for a nurse to arrive after his IV fell out, which was supplying —

**The Speaker:** Thank you. Minister of Health.

**Hon Mr Wilson:** Again, it would be very unfair to blame the restructuring for these problems. The restructuring is only —

*Interjection.*

**The Speaker:** The member for Oriole, it's a final warning. You have to come to order. Minister.

**Hon Mr Wilson:** The hospitals monitor very carefully the quality, and they have quality councils to ensure that the quality is maintained and indeed enhanced. As we go through the restructuring, we're going to see dollars freed up so that the hospital buildings that remain will have all

of the service needed to serve the patients who arrive at those buildings.

The fact that individual cases are raised today when the restructuring has not taken place, it's just beginning, speaks volumes for the need to continue to redouble our efforts and to move towards those modern, fully equipped hospitals that we all want for the people we serve in Ontario.

**Mr McGuinty:** Let's hear Keith Cooper's analysis of what's going wrong. He says: "The doctors, nurses, assistants and aides were cheerful and helpful despite being clearly overburdened. I noticed that all personnel spent their shifts in an unending frenzy of rushing from one duty to another just to prevent themselves from falling behind. In my case, and in many others I noted, relatives were either asked or simply volunteered to attend to the needs of their loved ones for lack of hospital personnel." That lack of hospital personnel is a direct result of your cuts. There is no two ways about it. Patient care is suffering in Ontario as a result of your actions.

Minister, do we have to raise more horror stories in here day after day after day? Do we have to tell you how your policies are hurting Ontario patients? Are you going to stand up right now and say, "I admit I made a mistake and I'm not going to proceed with the cuts"?

**Hon Mr Wilson:** Tens of thousands of Ontarians receive the best health care available in the world today right here in Ontario and in our hospitals. I'm very, very proud as Minister of Health, and I know all members of the government side are, at least, very proud of the work that our nurses and our doctors do to treat tens of thousands of patients every day in our over 200 public hospitals in the province.

In spite of the \$2 billion in federal cuts to health, we spend 6% more per person in Ontario than any other province in Canada, and we're right up there with — we're either number one, two or three in the entire world on health care spending right here in the province of Ontario, depending on how you measure it.

We spend enough money. The honourable member said that in the debates when he was running for the leadership of his party. We all agree that we have to restructure the system and make sure that money is spent on the patient you mentioned, and make sure that we continue every day to work towards improving the quality and making sure we indeed have a world-class system and Ontarians are confident.

**The Speaker:** New question. Leader of the third party.

**Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River):** My question is also for the Minister of Health. I would say to the Minister of Health that it's obvious to everybody else out there that you're not changing health care, you're cutting health care. I think you ought to own up to it.

Speaking about cuts, we've learned this morning that your hospital restructuring commission has decided that both mental health facilities in the London area, the St Thomas Psychiatric Hospital and the London Psychiatric Hospital, are to close. That means 300 beds for mental health gone. It means taking \$46 million a year out of mental health in southwestern Ontario.

Minister, your commission made a recommendation. They recommended that you reinvest the full \$46 million



in community-based services. I ask you, will you make a commitment here today to reinvest the full \$46 million in London, in southwestern Ontario, in mental health?

**Hon Mr Wilson:** During this 30-day process — right now the commission has made its interim findings in London — it's inappropriate at this point for the government to give its official response. That response will come during the 30 days and it will be made fully public.

I'll want to have further discussions, now that they've made some decisions, with the commission to see how they want that money spent. The commission has ordered, and we're all bound by this, that the plan be in place for mental health services before any of the changes are made in the psychiatric hospitals.

I will remind people again that the beds have been closed in those psych hospitals for years. They were built for almost 1,160 beds, I think, and for the last few years only 38% of those two buildings has actually ever been used to see patients. There's been a tremendous waste in maintenance and administration in those hospitals, and the commission is doing the right —

**The Speaker:** Thank you, Minister. Supplementary, leader of the third party.

**Mr Hampton:** What's interesting is that in Thunder Bay, in Sudbury and now it appears in London the minister has no trouble endorsing the commission's recommendations on closure of institutions, but when it comes to making a commitment to reinvestment he moves to the side, he moves back to the other side, he tries to find a place to hide.

The question is very simple. You're taking \$46 million a year out of mental health in the London area, and your own commission is recommending that you reinvest \$46 million a year into community-based mental health services. That's the question. I understand why you're trying to hesitate. You're trying to hesitate because you want to take that \$46 million and slide it over to the Minister of Finance so he can put it into his tax cut for your wealthy friends. That's the real game that's going on here.

Minister, why don't you speak up for health care? Make the commitment today —

**The Speaker:** Thank you, Leader. Minister of Health, go ahead.

**Hon Mr Wilson:** We're making the commitment. The honourable member is premature. We might have to spend more than \$46 million. That's been the case in other parts of the province so far with restructuring. We've actually had to spend more than what the commission is recommending in terms of community investments, and those plans and those announcements are well under way.

I must admit that the \$46 million of new money on mental health for one area of the province is more than the NDP spent in its entire five years. You announced a community investment fund of \$20 million, and during your entire five years you never spent one penny. That was \$20 million for the whole province. We came to office in 1995, and one of our first announcements was to begin to flow \$23 million into the community investment fund.

We didn't make airy-fairy announcements, and I'm not going to be pressured into making one like you used to

make. When we flow dollars under our budgeting system, we mean those dollars are flowing and the real, hard services are going in place. We're going to work with the commission to make sure those services are up and running for the people —

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker:** Member for Sudbury East, I ask you to come to order, and the member for Hamilton Centre.

**Mr Hampton:** That lecture coming from a Minister of Health who not a month before the last election said, "No hospitals will be closed by a Progressive Conservative government" — "No hospitals will be closed" was your statement — rings hollow all across the province.

We have an example of some reinvestment. Yesterday when we challenged this minister about cardiac care, he came up with all kinds of excuses. He said that it was a matter of capacity. But today, after getting some letters from some physicians and having the facts explained to him again, he finally admitted that there had to be more reinvestment in cardiac care. If you are making policy, Minister, it appears that you're making it on the fly.

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My issue is this. Minister, you talk about capacity. If capacity is not the availability of operating rooms, the availability of acute care beds, the appropriate number of nurses to care for patients, then what is it?

**Hon Jim Wilson:** I will apologize for my comments yesterday. I was in error. I had misread a note that was given to me by the department. I have corrected that error today and indeed we are flowing dollars immediately to the hospitals.

We made the largest single investment in recent years in cardiac surgery, some 19% increase in cardiac surgeries. We were told to do that last year by the Cardiac Care Network over three years. We flowed the dollars over two years — so we speeded up the process — and they've come back just recently when Mr Johnson was in the chair and asked for some more money to catch about 277 cardiac patients on the waiting list. We're going to flow those dollars right away to make sure those lists are shortened up and will be meeting on Monday with Mr Monaghan and others from the Cardiac Care Network to further develop long-range plans.

The province is growing a little older and getting incidents of heart disease even more often than the experts are predicting —

**The Speaker:** Thank you, Minister. New question, leader of the third party.

**Mr Hampton:** My next question is to the minister responsible for municipal affairs. I'd say to the Minister of Health, though, it is sad that people have to die on the cardiac waiting list before you recognize your mistakes.

## MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

**Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River):** To the Minister of Municipal Affairs, yesterday the Ontario Court of Justice threw out your attempt to assert a divine right of kings over local councils in Toronto. You've tried to shrug off the ruling, saying it has nothing to do with your legislation.



Minister, on January 14 in this Legislature you said, "However, as the trustees' right to examine municipal decisions will be retroactive to the day this legislation was introduced, it is in everyone's interests to cooperate with them."

It's clear that through Bill 103 and your trustees you are trying to intimidate municipal staff into doing something that you don't have the legal authority to enforce. You are wrong, Minister, and you are wrong about Bill 103. Will you go back to the drawing board, withdraw Bill 103 and sit down and begin a discussion with the people of Toronto?

**Hon Al Leach (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing):** I just want to ensure that the record shows that in that statement I made in January I also indicated that the trustees had no legal jurisdiction until such time as the legislation passed.

The court's decision yesterday only addressed the issue of processing an order in council prior to the legislation being passed. That's all the judgement called for. We have always said, as I indicated yesterday, that the trustees had no legal powers until such time as the legislation is passed. We've repeatedly said that.

What we wanted the trustees to do in the interim was to provide advice to municipalities after we introduce the legislation. It was the municipalities that were calling, asking who the trustees were and when they could meet to speak to them.

**Mr Hampton:** Sometimes this minister borders on the theatre of the absurd. This is what the judge said: You broke the law; you were acting outside the law. He said: "As a practical matter the municipal councils must conform now to...an act not yet in force. If these orders in council were allowed to stand, the government would be allowed to do indirectly what it cannot do directly." You'd be allowed to do unlawfully what you cannot do lawfully. The judge said you broke the law. Admit it — now.

The real issue here is everything else you've done: You've been found in contempt of the Legislature, a *prima facie* case; you've accused the mayors of electoral fraud —

**Hon Mr Leach:** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: The comments made by the member are incorrect and I'd ask that he — that situation did not occur, Mr Speaker.

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Although I know in the past that you've attempted to rise, I did think he added after "contempt," "on a *prima facie* case." I agree with —

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker:** Order. The minister has a good point here. The House did not find a *prima facie* case of contempt, so we have to be clear on what it is we're saying in the future.

*Interjections.*

**Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South):** He came in to apologize.

**The Speaker:** Order. Member for Cochrane South.

**Mr Gilles Pouliot (Lake Nipigon):** We're just helping him along. Listen to him.

**The Speaker:** The member for Lake Nipigon, I appreciate your assistance. I would caution all members,

when referring to that particular ruling, that we do so in the proper manner. Minister of Municipal Affairs, I accept that and I would caution the members of the House. Leader?

**Mr Hampton:** Speaker, to be sure, you found a *prima facie* case of contempt against this minister, and this minister accused the mayors of electoral fraud.

Minister, here it is: You've broken the law; a *prima facie* case of contempt against you; you've accused the mayors of electoral fraud. I'll tell you where this has gotten you: 68% of the people in Metropolitan Toronto now say they're going to vote no to your scheme.

Show some humility and show some credibility. Withdraw Bill 103 before you make another mistake.

**Hon Mr Leach:** I guess that's better than 90% that voted against the NDP in the last election.

To repeat —

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker:** It's all of their time. Minister?

**Hon Mr Leach:** Thank you, Mr Speaker. Again to address the issue, it was the processing of the orders in council that was in question. To repeat, we have been consistent in stating that the trustees did not have any legal jurisdiction until the legislation was passed. I can tell the House that the work that has been done by the trustees over the past month has been of great assistance to the municipalities. As a matter of fact, there will be a number of amendments introduced to the legislation as a result of the input from the trustees and their interface with the municipalities over the time they were there.

We certainly accept the position of the judge yesterday, and the board of trustees has been directed not to carry out any more work until the legislation —

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker:** Thank you. Members for Cochrane South and Welland-Thorold, please come to order. Thank you.

**Mr Hampton:** To explain it again to the minister, the courts said you broke the law. You can try to finesse that any way you like; that's the fact.

There's another fact here. Deloitte and Touche, a respected chartered accounting firm, has just done an analysis of your KPMG report. I know you don't want to hear this. I know —

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker:** Order. Government members, I appreciate the helpfulness of the government side as well, but it would be helpful if you just allowed him to continue.

Member for Durham East. Thank you.

**Mr Hampton:** This is what they say: "It is clear to us at this stage that there has not been put forth any concrete evidence that would support that there are savings of up to \$865 million over the first three years and \$300 million annually thereafter." That's what they say about your scheme: no proof whatsoever. They're basically being polite.

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In fact, Minister, according to the Environics poll, 53% of the people in Metropolitan Toronto believe their property taxes are going to go up under your scheme; only 7% believe they're going to go down. The taxpayers



believe your scheme is taking them in the wrong direction.

**Hon Mr Leach:** I've never heard of an accounting firm the member mentioned. However, the report produced by KPMG is backed up by KPMG, one of the most respected firms in North America, and I believe its numbers are correct.

I know that when amalgamation takes place and we have an opportunity to introduce best-practice standards throughout the new city, the costs of running government in this area will reduce. There will be the elimination of waste and duplication that we have now. There will be the elimination of six fire departments and seven planning departments and seven garbage departments. There will be substantial savings as a result of that as soon as this legislation is passed.

### NUCLEAR SAFETY

**Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition):** My question is for the Ministry of Energy and it has to do with the safety of Ontario's nuclear generating stations. Minister, yesterday, after more than a year of delay, you finally released a damning report on the safety of Ontario Hydro's nuclear reactors. This report was hidden for over a year. In fact, Ontario Hydro even went to court to keep its contents secret, and now we know why.

That report makes it look like Homer Simpson would be very comfortable working at Ontario's nuclear reactors. We've got accounts of workers sleeping on the job. We've got accounts of workers playing computer games. The report describes further situations which, if not corrected, "increase the probability of a significant event, with serious consequences," at the plant.

Minister, what do you have to say to the people living in the shadows of our nuclear reactors? How can they expect to have any confidence in the safety of those plants with that kind of report in front of them?

**Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Environment and Energy):** We are of course concerned with the safety of our nuclear facilities. The members for Durham West, Durham East and Bruce have been in constant contact with me over these kinds of issues as they are expressed by their residents.

The peer reports which the Leader of the Opposition is talking about were for the time period which was basically covered by the previous government and the previous chair of Hydro, from 1992 to 1995. There have been many corrective actions taken since that point in time.

The nature of a peer review report is like an internal audit and is practised by various nuclear facilities across the world. This is a very common procedure. By the very nature of disclosure of the information, it impugns the process in the future to have people come forward with honest, straightforward information. That's the theory of it.

**Mr McGuinty:** I have an internal memo of the Atomic Energy Control Board written in August of last year. It reads as follows, in part: "Pickering A risk assessment shows a relatively high severe core damage frequency. The severe core damage frequency as published is higher than is normally calculated in other risk assessments

worldwide." It also says, "Nuclear safety, supervision and management issues continues to be a significant problem."

Minister, you're telling us that everything is fine or that the responsibility lies somehow with the previous government. This licence is up for renewal now. It was only extended for six months last time. The usual length of extension is for two years. That licence is up for renewal. When I hear, as a member of the public, that Pickering has a "relatively high severe core damage frequency," I get concerned. Why aren't you?

**Hon Mr Sterling:** Of course I'm concerned and of course I have to rely as a minister on the Atomic Energy Control Board, which is a federal agency, as you know, and is responsible for the regulating and licensing of these facilities. When they examined the safety procedures of the Pickering plant and issued a licence in December for a further six months, I presumed they knew what they were doing because they are a very credible organization and therefore approved what was going on there.

I might add that over the past six months the chairman of Hydro has recognized the concern shown by the AECB and last summer created a nuclear safety review committee to oversee the utility's nuclear program, and more recently, about a month ago, appointed a seven-member team of nuclear experts —

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Thank you, Minister. New question, third party.

### SERVICES EN FRANÇAIS AUX HÔPITAUX FRENCH-LANGUAGE HOSPITAL SERVICES

**M. Gilles Bisson (Cochrane-Sud) :** Ma question est pour le ministre de la Santé.

Vous le savez, je vous rappelle, que suite à un incident l'automne dernier ici à l'Assemblée législative, le premier ministre a affirmé aux journalistes que votre gouvernement n'était pas seulement pour protéger les services en français, mais que vous alliez les promouvoir. Comme vous le savez, la commission de restructuration des hôpitaux a recommandé que l'hôpital Montfort, le seul hôpital francophone en Ontario, soit fermé.

Je vous rappelle que c'est votre gouvernement qui a fait cette promesse l'automne passé que vous n'alliez pas seulement protéger les services en français, mais que vous alliez les promouvoir.

Étant donné que vous avez fait cette promesse, êtes-vous prêt à renverser la décision de la commission de restructuration pour empêcher la fermeture de l'hôpital Montfort, le seul hôpital francophone en Ontario ?

**Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Health):** I thank the honourable member for the question. I know he's very sincere in stating the concerns that have been expressed by some members of the francophone or French-language community in Ottawa-Carleton. The Health Services Restructuring Commission, under the leadership of Dr Duncan Sinclair, I think shares your depth of sincerity on this issue. They've gone to great pains to ensure that a plan is in place and will be further developed to ensure that French-language services are available to the people who need those services in Ottawa-Carleton.



There are a number of health care institutions already in that area designated to provide those services now, and I think you'll see a maintenance of the level of service now available; in fact, I think you'll see an improvement.

**M. Bisson :** Ce n'est pas acceptable. Ce n'est pas ma sincérité que le monde d'Ottawa craint, c'est la vôtre. Je vous rappelle que c'est votre décision, c'est vous qui est en charge, c'est votre gouvernement qui va faire cette décision, et c'est seulement à vous, comme ministre de la Santé, de renverser la décision de cette commission.

Je reviens à ma question : l'automne passé, suite à un incident malheureux ici à l'Assemblée où je me suis fait dire, «Speak English,» le jour suivant, le premier ministre essayait de rassurer le communauté francophone que votre gouvernement non seulement respecterait les services en français, mais que vous alliez les promouvoir.

Avec la fermeture de l'hôpital Montfort, est-ce que votre gouvernement dit à la communauté francophone, «Speak English,» quand on veut avoir des services en français ?

**Hon Mr Wilson:** The hospital building itself doesn't provide the services; it's the people. Many of the staff from Montfort Hospital will acquire new jobs in the Civic and in the General and in the other hospitals that remain. It's the people who speak the language, it's the people who love the culture, not the building. Those people will move and they'll provide more services.

There was a case raised yesterday by the other opposition party about a patient being transferred from one hospital to another and allegedly not being able to receive services. There will be better French-language services. They will be required by the law. The law is fully intact, the French Language Services Act, as the people move to provide those services. The Ottawa Heart Institute, in fact, perhaps will gain under this scenario and have more people on staff who speak French, and that's where the heart surgery is done, not at Montfort Hospital. So I can see a number of scenarios where French-language services will improve for the people who need those services.

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## AQUARIUM

**Mr Derwyn Shea (High Park-Swansea):** My question is for the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism. Yesterday, Torontonians were greeted with yet another announcement of a world-class aquarium in a series, a procession of announcements that have been made over the years of such a proposal for an aquarium. Can you tell us what makes this one more likely to take place, and if it does take place, why is it taking place on crown land, on public sector land? What is the relationship between the operator, Ontario Place and the government? What will be the job spinoffs and what will be the spinoffs for tourism?

**Hon William Saunderson (Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism):** I'm very happy to respond to the member for High Park-Swansea. This is a very good example of more private sector participation with our government and it underlines the thrust of our government to have this happen. It's going to be located

on public lands at the eastern end of Ontario Place. It is an investment of more than \$80 million. It is a facility of more than 100,000 square feet. There will be 300 construction jobs and 150 full-time jobs. The forecast is two million visitors per year. It is very good news for Ontario's economic development and it means more jobs for our province.

**Mr Shea:** Now we come to the hard part of the question. The last time an aquarium was proposed for this municipality, there was a huge debate about whether there would be mammals such as whales and dolphins involved in the aquarium.

**Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine):** Tell us a fish story, Derwyn.

**Mr Shea:** It may not be of any concern to the members of the third party, but it is to a lot of other people in Metropolitan Toronto and beyond. Will you tell this House what will be the policy in terms of mammals at the aquarium? Will there be whales and dolphins held in captivity?

**Hon Mr Saunderson:** There's never an easy question from that gentleman over there, particularly when the seals over there are all making a noise. There will be many thousands of fish, many species of fish, and there will be one million gallons of water in the aquarium, but there will be no whales or dolphins. They will not be displayed.

There will be a special exhibit on Canada's marine life. The goal of the builders, Ripley Entertainment Inc, is to build the best aquarium in the world. There will be technical facilities for our schools and our university students. It's just another example of the confidence that will be shown in our special area of Toronto.

## HOSPITAL RESTRUCTURING

**Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East):** My question is to the Minister of Health. Your restructuring of health care is continuing to create chaos across Ontario. You have created a crisis in almost every community. You have cut hospital budgets, and you are going to reinvest that into community health care. In my own community, you cut over \$30 million out of hospital budgets. Then you moved to cut \$8.5 million out of Macassa Lodge — community health care. Let me give you a couple of examples of the impact this is having.

Mrs Fitzpatrick, a constituent in Hamilton Mountain, suffered a major stroke in August 1996 and was put on a waiting list for surgery in March 1997. In January 1997 she suffered another major stroke. Her doctor made it very clear in talking to us that it would have been avoided had she received surgery and medical attention earlier.

Ms Jeanette Guigue, of Hamilton, in July 1996 was brought into an emergency room in a Hamilton hospital as a result of chest pains. There was a shortage of beds, a shortage of nurses, confusion in the emergency room. She was released. An hour and a half later, she died in the arms of her common-law spouse at home. Can you explain to these families who have family members at Macassa Lodge how your cuts are not hurting people?



**Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Health):** In the time period the honourable member is discussing, we were just beginning to improve services in the health care system. The fact of the matter is that Hamilton is about to undergo, when the commission gets to Hamilton, restructuring. The fact of the matter is that today we're wasting money on things other than spending that money on patients. I think all members honestly agree that we have to pool the money and make sure that we have more nurses and more services available in the hospital buildings that remain.

The honourable member may wish to also bring the individual particulars of this case to the ministry's attention, and I'd be happy to facilitate that, because it's very important that as problems occur and as individual cases occur, every day we —

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Answer, please.

**Hon Mr Wilson:** — ensure that we take every step possible to make sure that those problems don't occur again and that corrections are made.

**Mr Agostino:** I wish I could bring those cases to your attention, but in one she has already passed away and the other one has suffered a second major stroke as a result of waiting. It's a little late for those folks. Let me tell you that the chief of medical staff at Joe Brant hospital, Dr Ben Carruthers, in response to your cuts, said: "It's not the level of care a community expects or deserves. It will reduce quality and it will increase health care risks."

As a result of your policies, Joe Brant hospital has now put in a policy where men and women have to share rooms as a result of a bed shortage. That's a result of your cuts. That policy was abandoned many years ago across this province. Your own member for Burlington South suggested that accident victims or people who are injured in Hamilton or Stoney Creek, because there's a shortage in Burlington and the emergency room was closed, should now be taken to Joe Brant hospital.

You're now putting walls, you're now dividing communities, you're now putting hospital against hospital. How long can you continue this reckless abandonment of health care in Ontario and how many people have to die or be turned away from emergency hospitals before you come to your senses and restore some sanity to health care in this province?

**Hon Mr Wilson:** Ontario is the last province to restructure its health care system. As I look at the literature that's available, and in the discussions I've had with other health ministers across Canada, clearly restructuring improves the quality and the accessibility of services.

**Mr Gerard Kennedy (York South):** In Alberta?

**Hon Mr Wilson:** Yes, in Alberta, in Saskatchewan. Ask the Liberal health ministers, ask Dr King, the chair —

**Mr Kennedy:** It didn't work.

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker:** The member for York South, come to order, please, and the member for Oriole. Minister.

**Hon Mr Wilson:** Ask Dr Russell King, chair of Canada's health ministers this year, who's undergone extensive restructuring in New Brunswick and was able to improve. Ask the Liberal health minister in Newfound-

land who closed a hospital in his own riding and was able to show that access improved because they took a couple of hospitals that were half-empty, put them together and ended up with more nurses, more doctors, modern drug therapies and modern technologies.

That's what we're trying to do here in Ontario with the help of the Health Services Restructuring Commission. They themselves are recognized throughout the world as leaders in restructuring the health care system and we're using and relying on the advice from those —

**The Speaker:** Thank you, Minister. New question. Third party.

## PRINCE EDWARD HEIGHTS

**Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine):** My question is to the Minister of Community and Social Services. I want to raise the concerns of people of the Picton area with respect to your proposed closure of Prince Edward Heights. As you know, this is a facility for people with developmental disabilities. There are about 228 clients living there, many of whom have lived there for most of their lives. Most of these clients are adults.

I want to be very clear with you: Our party supports deinstitutionalization and moves to the community, but you're closing this facility at the same time as you are cutting supports to the community. You can't transfer people to the community when the supports aren't there.

In addition to that, there will always be some clients who function at a level so low that they require the intensive supports like those at a facility such as Prince Edward. It is incredible. There's a ward system, with professional staff, kinesiologists and others who work with those low-level-functioning clients, that is world-class. There's a village setting that is phenomenal.

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Question.

**Ms Lankin:** I actually believe if you went there and you saw that, you would agree with us that this is one facility that you shouldn't close, that you need that resource for the people who are there now and who will need that service in the future.

**Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Community and Social Services):** I appreciate the concern that motivates the question. It's a very difficult issue as we try and do what many other governments have been doing, what many other jurisdictions are doing, and take people from institutions and give them better quality care in the community.

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The member is right to point out that some individuals require different kinds of care in the community. Some are able to live more independently; others need round-the-clock care. That is one of the reasons why, in the announcement last year, we're taking the next four years to slowly build the community supports, so that as these transfers take place, those families can rest assured that their loved ones, their children will get the care they need.

As the honourable member also knows, one of the things we are doing in moving resources from the institutions is taking those resources and transferring them



to those very important community supports. It was a move that her government supported as well.

**The Speaker:** Supplementary. Leader of the third party.

**Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River):** We wanted to give this supplementary to your member for Prince Edward-Lennox-South Hastings, Mr Fox, but he's not here any more, or not around, so I'll ask it.

I was in Picton a week ago for a community meeting to which you were invited, Minister. You were invited to the community meeting to talk about the closing of Prince Edward Heights. I went, you didn't, and I heard first hand from the people who were there that they see the community supports being cut; first hand that they know there are people now at Prince Edward Heights who can't survive in the outside community. They simply will not be able to exist in the outside community, especially if you cut the community supports.

I also heard that closing Prince Edward Heights affects the whole community of Picton. It means pulling \$20 million out of the local economy in a town of 4,000 people.

Minister, I think you owe it to the residents at Prince Edward Heights and to the people who work there to go to the community and to hear their case. Will you commit to doing that, going there, talking to the people and seeing the facilities?

**Hon Mrs Ecker:** I would like to remind the honourable member that I don't think trying to politicize this particular issue is going to help the families with the residents they have in this particular facility.

I would like to remind the honourable member as well that the Prince Edward Association for Community Living applauded the provincial government's plan to move people from institutions back to the community. They said last summer when we made this announcement: "This is a great day for people with developmental disabilities and their families. We hold the view that all people have a right to a decent life in the community. This is an important step on the path towards that vision."

I would also like to remind the honourable member that I can appreciate that members of the union who have staged the meeting and who wanted to get their concerns on the record have concerns about their jobs. I appreciate that. I have a concern about making sure that the services and the supports are there for those members who are moving from the institution —

**The Speaker:** Thank you, Minister.

#### MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

**Mr Toby Barrett (Norfolk):** My question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. I've been asked by a number of municipalities in my riding about the changes which are occurring as a result of the change of responsibilities between the provincial and municipal levels of government. Would the minister please tell me what process has been put in place to allow municipalities a say in the formulation of requirements for the \$1-billion community reinvestment fund, the \$800-million municipal capital and operating fund and the \$700-million municipal social assistance reserve fund?

**Hon Al Leach (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing):** I thank the member for Norfolk for giving me the opportunity to tell the House about our partnership with municipalities and how we're going to deal with the Who Does What fiscal swap.

On February 21, I jointly announced with the Minister of Community and Social Services and the president of AMO the creation of two special transition teams that will be recommending ways of designing and implementing the proposed changes. Chairing both of the committees is Terry Mundell, president of AMO. The member for Chatham-Kent, Jack Carroll, who is the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Community and Social Services, will co-chair the social and community health services team, and the member for Oxford, Ernie Hardeman, who is the parliamentary assistant to my ministry, will co-chair the provincial-municipal team.

The first issue these teams will explore will be the design and distribution of the three funds to help ensure that the special needs of Ontario's municipalities are met.

**Mr Barrett:** Could the minister further inform the House about the reaction of the municipal community to the announcement of these two panels?

**Hon Mr Leach:** Again I would like to thank the member for his question, and share with all the members of the House the positive feedback we're getting from the municipal community. Municipalities have been assured that these teams, in the transition, will help implement the new municipal and provincial responsibilities in a very smooth manner. We're looking for advice from the municipalities on how best to proceed, and we are prepared to explore all the options with those municipalities. Terry Mundell, the president of the association, says that he feels very optimistic now that municipalities are at the table to assist us in this design and plan for change.

We feel it's essential for the province to work hand-in-hand with the municipalities, that we have to be partners in this process. They're there with us to make sure the transition works very smoothly.

#### SCHOOL BOARDS

**Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury):** My question is to the Minister of Education and Training. Minister, I listened with interest yesterday as you and the member for Huron bemoaned the fact that the Huron Board of Education was going to spend \$7,500 on a court challenge to Bill 104 rather than spending it on textbooks. My first question is very simple. In fact it's a grade 5 mathematics problem. If the average textbook costs \$25, how many textbooks can Johnny buy for \$749,878?

**Hon John Snobelen (Minister of Education and Training):** I'm not surprised that the member opposite would ask the question. I'm a little surprised his research department couldn't give him the answer. Perhaps ours can, and I'll take the question under advisement.

**Mr Bartolucci:** Well, you could have asked any one of the pages who are in grades 7 and 8 and they would have told you. As the Minister of Education, you should have been able to figure out that you would have got 29,995 textbooks. Let me quote from Hansard when you said yesterday: "Spending \$800,000...enough for textbooks for a thousand classrooms."



Minister, would you tell the people of Ontario that the answer you gave me to my order paper question is correct when you said: "The Ministry of Education and Training is running television ads featuring Premier Harris. The total cost of these ads is \$749,878"? That's enough textbooks for a thousand classrooms. Will you tell the people of Ontario that the answer you gave me is correct, that \$749,878 of their money is being spent on education ads featuring the Premier?

**Hon Mr Snobelen:** I welcome the question because it's an opportunity to address what is obviously a rather confused member. Yes, the government is getting its message out about changes to education to the people of Ontario, and improvements to education to the people of Ontario. Yes, we have boards across the province that have also issued information to people, and we have not objected to that. What we do object to is the cost being put into a legal format which is not necessary.

I can give the member opposite one more piece of information that may be useful to him. With our new funding plan we will make sure that the number of textbooks in the classrooms across the province is the number that is needed.

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** With due respect to the Liberal Party, there is only so much time in question period. Clearly, if I get up the NDP will lose their question, and I think it's only appropriate that you respond appropriately with the little time left.

#### ASSISTED HOUSING

**Mr Rosario Marchese (Fort York):** My question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. It's quite clear I won't have the supplementary, so I'll try to combine the questions.

Minister, this morning our leader, Howard Hampton, and the federal leader of the NDP, Alexa McDonough, wrote a letter to Prime Minister Jean Chrétien urging him to break off negotiations with your government on the downloading of federal housing units. Tomorrow night hundreds of co-op members are going to be gathering together at a rally to fight this particular problem that they know is going to be one of the biggest worries they will have faced.

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It's been estimated that if interest rates go up by 1%, it will cost municipalities \$111 million a year. We fear and the co-op members fear that their plan to dump co-ops and non-profit housing on to the municipalities will put municipalities' property taxpayers and families at risk.

Minister, my question to you is: If the interest rates go up, who's going to pay?

**Hon Al Leach (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing):** With the \$6.2 billion in education costs coming off the property tax, that leaves a huge amount of room for municipalities to pick up the services we're asking them to be responsible for.

The municipalities have approached me and said, "We believe that we're best equipped to handle the administration and operation of social housing." Municipalities are

responsible for social housing now. Have you ever heard of Cityhome? Have you ever heard of MTHA, the Metro housing organization? They're responsible for them now; they pay the subsidy now.

By the way, we're in negotiations with the federal government. We want to ensure that the federal money that flows to social housing from the federal government continues to do so, and I'm confident that it will.

#### MOTIONS

##### PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

**Hon David Johnson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Government House Leader):** I move that notwithstanding standing order 96(d), Mrs Pupatello and Mr Doyle exchange places in the order of precedence for private members' public business. I think that's what they want.

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

##### COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTIONS

**Hon David Johnson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Government House Leader):** I also move that the following substitutions be made to the membership of the standing committees:

On the standing committee on administration of justice, Mr Kormos for Mr Wildman and Mr Christopherson for Mrs Boyd; on the standing committee on estimates, Ms Lankin for Mr Kormos; and on the standing committee on social development, Mrs Boyd for Ms Lankin.

**The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell):** Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

#### PETITIONS

##### NORTH YORK BRANSON HOSPITAL

**Mr Monte Kwinter (Wilson Heights):** I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the final report of the Metropolitan Toronto District Health Council hospital restructuring committee has recommended that North York Branson Hospital merge with York-Finch hospital; and

"Whereas this recommendation will remove emergency and inpatient services currently provided by North York Branson Hospital, which will seriously jeopardize medical care and the quality of health for the growing population which the hospital serves, many being elderly people who in numerous cases require treatment for life-threatening medical conditions;

"We petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reject the recommendation contained within the final report of the Metropolitan Toronto District Health Council hospital restructuring committee as it pertains to North York Branson Hospital, so that it retains, at minimum, emergency and inpatient services."

I have affixed my signature.



## FIRE SAFETY

**Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale):** I have a petition from the firefighters of Ontario, and like all my colleagues who have read these, I will read one into the record today. It reads:

"Speed, experience and teamwork save lives. Don't get burned by Bill 84.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Firefighters need speed, experience and teamwork to save lives. I oppose any legislation that could undermine the work of my local firefighters and jeopardize fire safety in my community. Please listen to professional firefighters and amend Bill 84 to eliminate the threat to fire safety."

I add my signature to this petition.

## MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

**Mr Dan Newman (Scarborough Centre):** I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and it reads as follows:

"Whereas the city of Scarborough is requiring individuals who want to participate in the mail-in referendum to provide their name, address and signature on the ballot; and

"Whereas this requirement is blatantly undemocratic and threatens the legitimacy of the democratic process; and

"Whereas the city of Scarborough makes no mention as to whether or not it will accept ballots from residents who wish to vote in confidence; and

"Whereas the question on the ballot itself is slanted towards the position of the city and cannot be viewed as a neutral question; and

"Whereas this uncertainty and undemocratic procedure makes the entire process a great misuse of taxpayers' dollars and tarnishes any results that will come out of the vote;

"Therefore, be it resolved that we, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario to

"(1) Speak out against this undemocratic vote;

"(2) Disregard the results of the vote; and

"(3) Continue the proposed unification of the municipalities into one unified city of Toronto."

## HOSPITAL RESTRUCTURING

**Mrs Sandra Papatello (Windsor-Sandwich):** I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas Windsor-Essex county was the first community to undergo hospital restructuring; and

"Whereas the community supported the recommendations of the Win-Win report based on a funding model that included the expansion of community-based care; and

"Whereas recent reports estimate that Windsor-Essex hospitals are underfunded by approximately \$122 million; and

"Whereas this represents the lowest funding per capita for hospital services of any community in Ontario with a population of over 200,000; and

"Whereas hospitals across the province have been forced to further reduce expenditures 18%; and

"Whereas these cuts have forced hospitals to eliminate emergency services in the west end of Windsor and cut desperately needed services; and

"Whereas the minister acknowledged that additional funding was necessary in high-growth areas; and

"Whereas Ontarians are gravely concerned with the historic \$1.3-billion cut to base funding of hospitals;

"Whereas Ontarians feel that health services are suffering; and

"Whereas the government is reducing hospital funding and not reinvesting millions of dollars into the communities that they are being taken away from;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to call on the Conservative government to stop the cuts to base funding for hospitals across Ontario and to ensure that community services are in place before the removal of hospital services. The Conservative government must fund hospitals with a funding formula that reflects demographic and regional needs. The Conservative government must ensure that health services are available, including emergency and urgent care to all Ontarians."

I affix my signature.

## FIRE SAFETY

**Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie):** I have a petition here signed by a whole whack of people concerned about what's happening to firefighters across the province under the guise of Bill 84.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Firefighters need speed, experience and teamwork to save lives. I oppose any legislation that could undermine the work of my local firefighters and jeopardize fire safety in my community. Please listen to professional firefighters and amend Bill 84 to eliminate the threat to fire safety."

I have signed my name to this petition.

## MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

**Mr John L. Parker (York East):** I continue to receive this petition from residents of East York. It's addressed to Legislative Assembly of Ontario and reads as follows:

"Whereas the borough of East York is requiring voters in the current mail-in referendum to return their ballots in envelopes bearing their names and addresses; and

"Whereas the ballots are to be forwarded to the borough of East York at the East York Civic Centre and not to an independent elections commission; and

"Whereas the East York council has declared itself in favour of a particular result in the referendum; and

"Whereas the question itself is prejudicial in its wording and clearly slanted towards the result favoured by council; and

"Whereas all of the above factors violate well-established and universally acknowledged principles of a free democratic referendum process;

"Therefore, be it resolved that we, the undersigned, petition the Ontario Legislature to:

"(1) Speak out against the current flawed, undemocratic referendum in East York;



"(2) Disregard the results of the vote; and

"(3) Proceed with the government's program to provide for Toronto's future through the creation of one Toronto for all of us."

#### FIRE SAFETY

**Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre):** I have a petition dealing with Bill 84.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Firefighters need speed, experience and teamwork to save lives. I oppose any legislation that could undermine the work of my local firefighters and jeopardize fire safety in my community. Please listen to professional firefighters and amend Bill 84 to eliminate the threat to fire safety."

This is duly signed, and I affix my signature to this as well.

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#### MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

**Mr Len Wood (Cochrane North):** I have a petition here addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the government of Ontario is proposing to restructure completely the provincial-municipal relationship without having consulted the people of Ontario; and

"This restructuring proposes to download to municipalities the cost of transportation and such critical social services as welfare and long-term care for the elderly and the chronically ill; and

"Removes school boards' ability to tax, eliminating any effective local control over schools and school programs; and

"The government's actions fail to guarantee existing levels of funding and fail to recognize the unequal ability of local communities to bear the cost of these new burdens, thus producing inequitable access to essential services; and

"Whereas the government's lack of meaningful public consultation and disregard for public response pose a serious threat to democracy;

"We, the undersigned residents of Ontario, because we care about the quality of life in our province and the wellbeing of our children, neighbours and communities, register a vote of non-confidence to the government in the province of Ontario."

It's signed by people from Kapuskasing, Fauquier, Moonbeam and all throughout Cochrane North. I affix my signature to the petition.

#### REGENT PARK COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTRE

**Mr Steve Gilchrist (Scarborough East):** On behalf of the member for St George-St David, I have a petition in support of continuing Ministry of Health funding for the Regent Park Community Health Centre signed by a number of people in his riding, and I'm pleased to present it.

#### MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

**Mr Mario Sergio (Yorkview):** I have another petition addressed to the Legislature of Ontario.

"Whereas 'bigger government is not better' and the Mike Harris government has no right to dictate a megacity upon the citizens of Metro Toronto; and

"Whereas the megacity is being imposed on 2.3 million citizens in Metro Toronto without giving people a voice in the future of their cities and neighbourhoods; and

"Whereas a megacity could lead to mega property tax increases, mega user fees and mega cuts in services; and

"Whereas the Tories never proposed abolishing local government in favour of bigger government during the election campaign;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario as follows:

"To give the 2.3 million people in Metro Toronto a say in the future of their cities and stop the imposition of a megacity."

I concur, and I will affix my signature to it.

#### FIRE SAFETY

**Ms Shelley Martel (Sudbury East):** I have a petition which is addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and it reads as follows:

"Firefighters need speed, experience and teamwork to save lives. I oppose any legislation that could undermine the work of my local firefighters and jeopardize fire safety in my community. Please listen to professional firefighters and amend Bill 84 to eliminate the threat to fire safety."

This is signed by 15 residents of Burlington. I agree with the petitioners, and I have signed it as well.

#### HOSPITAL FINANCING

**Mr Allan K. McLean (Simcoe East):** I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas Ontarians are gravely concerned with the historic \$1.3-billion cut to base funding of hospitals; and

"Whereas Ontarians feel that health services are suffering; and

"Whereas the government is reducing hospital funding and not reinvesting millions of dollars into the communities that they are being taken away from;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to call on the Conservative government to stop the cuts to base funding for hospitals across Ontario and to ensure that community services are in place before the removal of hospital services. The Conservative government must fund hospitals with a funding formula that reflects demographic and regional needs. The Conservative government must ensure that health services are available, including emergency and urgent care, to all Ontarians."

That's signed by 46 people from my riding.

#### MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

**Mr Frank Miclash (Kenora):** I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It reads:

"Whereas the government of Ontario is proposing to restructure completely the provincial-municipal relationship without having consulted the people of Ontario; and



"This restructuring proposes to download to municipalities the cost of transportation and such critical social services as welfare and long-term care for the elderly and the chronically ill; and

"Removes school boards' ability to tax, eliminating any effective local control over schools and school programs; and

"The government's actions fail to guarantee existing levels of funding and fail to recognize the unequal ability of local communities to bear the cost of these new burdens, thus producing inequitable access to essential services; and

"Whereas the government's lack of meaningful public consultation and disregard for public response pose a serious threat to democracy;

"We, the undersigned residents of Ontario, because we care about the quality of life in our province and the wellbeing of our children, neighbours and communities, register a vote of non-confidence to the government in the province of Ontario."

That's signed by a good number of my constituents from the Dryden area, and I attach my name to that petition as well.

#### FIRE SAFETY

**Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre):** I have a petition signed by citizens from Hamilton, Stoney Creek and Burlington. It reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Firefighters need speed, experience and teamwork to save lives. I oppose any legislation that could undermine the work of my local firefighters and jeopardize fire safety in my community. Please listen to professional firefighters and amend Bill 84 to eliminate the threat to fire safety."

I proudly add my name to theirs.

#### HOSPITAL FINANCING

**Mr Bill Murdoch (Grey-Owen Sound):** I have a petition from my riding. I must say that the Minister of Health is addressing most of their concerns, but I will read it to the House. It's a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas Ontarians are gravely concerned with the historic \$1.3-billion cut to base funding of hospitals; and

"Whereas Ontarians feel that health services are suffering; and

"Whereas the government is reducing hospital funding and not reinvesting millions of dollars into the communities that they are being taken away from;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly to call on the Conservative government to stop the cuts to base funding for hospitals across Ontario and to ensure that community services are in place before the removal of hospital services. The Conservative government must fund hospitals with a funding formula that reflects demographic and regional needs. The Conservative government must ensure that health services are available, including emergency and urgent care, to all Ontarians."

#### HEALTH CARE FUNDING

**Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex South):** I have a petition signed by over 100 people, presented by Rose Kulimowski and Mae Mussolum, who have been working very hard with their concern about health care. I have submitted these petitions before. It asks that the government maintain its promise to protect health care funding and to not cut health care. I affix my signature to this petition.

#### FIRE SAFETY

**Ms Shelley Martel (Sudbury East):** I have another petition which is addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It reads as follows:

"Firefighters need speed, experience and teamwork to save lives. I oppose any legislation that could undermine the work of my local firefighters and jeopardize fire safety in my community. Please listen to professional firefighters and amend Bill 84 to eliminate the threat to fire safety."

This is signed by 15 residents of Collingwood. I agree with the petitioners and I have signed my name as well.

#### HIGHWAY 17

**Mr Jean-Marc Lalonde (Prescott and Russell):** A petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas accidents are a common occurrence and because a report from the Rockland OPP shows that 23 serious accidents occurred on Highway 17 between Rockland and Orléans in the past eight months;

"Whereas a study shows that more than 18,000 cars travel on the stretch of 20 kilometres of Highway 17 every day;

"Whereas concept designs are done, public hearings were held and some pieces of land purchased,

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We ask that the Minister of Transportation, Al Palladini, put back the widening of Highway 17 from Trim Road to Clarence Point on his priority list as we ask the government to set aside the funds needed for this project before downloading Highway 17 responsibility to the municipality."

I affix my signature on this petition.

#### REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

##### STANDING COMMITTEE ON REGULATIONS AND PRIVATE BILLS

**Mr Toby Barrett (Norfolk):** I beg leave to present a report from the standing committee on regulations and private bills and move its adoption.

**Senior Clerk Assistant and Clerk of Journals (Mr Alex D. McFedries):** Your committee begs to report the following bill as amended:

Bill Pr63, An Act respecting the Bank of Nova Scotia Trust Company, Montreal Trust Company of Canada and Montreal Trust Company.



Your committee begs to report the following bill without amendment:

Bill Pr73, An Act respecting the City of Ottawa.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson):** Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed.

1530

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

### LOCAL CONTROL OF PUBLIC LIBRARIES ACT, 1997

#### LOI DE 1997 SUR LE CONTRÔLE LOCAL DES BIBLIOTHÈQUES PUBLIQUES

Ms Mushinski moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 109, An Act to amend the Public Libraries Act to put authority, responsibility and accountability for providing and effectively managing local library services at the local level / Projet de loi 109, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les bibliothèques publiques de façon à situer à l'échelon local les pouvoirs, la responsabilité et l'obligation de rendre compte concernant la fourniture et la gestion efficace des services locaux de bibliothèque.

**Hon Marilyn Mushinski (Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation):** As we begin second reading of Bill 109, the Local Control of Public Libraries Act, 1997, I would like to say how proud we are of our public libraries. Libraries in communities throughout the province have touched the lives of every Ontario resident and have made a very significant contribution to the quality of life that we enjoy.

The new library framework proposes both to improve library service to the people of Ontario and to lower the costs for those services. The framework would make a significant difference — for the better, we believe — to the public libraries of Ontario by giving municipalities the authority to make the best use of their library resources.

Our public libraries have served the province very well for more than 100 years. They have evolved from a disparate group of individual collections of books to an interconnected information network. Ontario's libraries have not only kept pace with the information revolution, they have indeed led the way.

The government knows that libraries are an essential building block in the development of a well-educated workforce, which is one of our province's greatest assets. This bill and a new regulation under the Municipal Act would together form a new framework for our libraries. Under this framework, the government proposes that local officials be given the authority and the responsibility to effectively manage their libraries to the best advantage of their communities in which the libraries serve. We believe that local officials will make choices which are right for their communities.

The framework would also guarantee that our history of quality service will continue. Free access to information is the cornerstone of our proud library tradition. Under the proposed framework, libraries would continue to offer free access to library facilities; use of library

materials on library premises would continue to be free of charge, as would the borrowing of books and other print material by residents; borrowing of special format materials for residents with disabilities would also be offered by libraries without charge. The framework would clarify libraries' right to charge for other services. This would permit the policies and fees governing these services to be set at the local level to reflect local priorities.

The essence of this bill is the placing of responsibility and authority for the effective management of our public libraries at the local level. Local authorities are the people who know what is best for their communities. The people who sit on library boards and on municipal councils are also patrons of their own libraries. They and their families will use and depend on the library resources in the communities. These are the people we can trust to make the decisions that are right for their libraries and for their communities.

At present, municipalities provide more than 80% of library funding, yet the legislation currently in effect prescribes an uncomfortable and often unclear mixture of local and provincial authority. The current Public Libraries Act creates extensive and unnecessary intrusions, dictating decisions that are best made at the local level. This proposed legislation defines the responsibility and authority for our public libraries and puts the onus of responsibility where it rightly belongs, at the local level.

This bill is part of a larger legislative framework which responds to the recommendations of the Who Does What panel. The review of library services undertaken by my ministry actually began before the work of the Who Does What panel. The goals of our review and the goals of the panel were very similar. Accordingly, the government's proposals on the new library framework are, by and large, consistent with the recommendations of the Who Does What panel.

The changes put forward by my colleague Minister Snobelen would relieve municipalities of the obligation to fund education. That measure, if adopted by this House, will free up municipal funds, which can be applied to other local services, including libraries.

We can also expect certain economies in libraries through the simplification of the administration of libraries. Most process-oriented requirements prescribed by the province under the Public Libraries Act would be removed by Bill 109. At present the province provides a small portion of the operational funding for libraries. The new library framework proposes that provincial contributions to operational funding be phased out. Provincial resources will continue to be directed at the network connecting Ontario's libraries.

Library users will be familiar with the advantages of this network, because a part of it is dedicated to the interlibrary loan system. We almost take for granted the fact that any library patron may request and receive a book from the circulating collection of any library anywhere in this province. In the future, the Ontario library network could connect our libraries with high-speed digital links over which information will be conveyed in multimedia formats. It is this umbrella network as well as policy support, strategic funding and



forging partnerships that express the government's best role in our public library system.

I am pleased to recommend this bill to the members of this House. Its adoption would provide a solid basis upon which Ontario's public libraries can build their futures. This legislation and the new library framework can position our public libraries to continue to be the most accessible sources of information for the people of Ontario for another 100 years.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson):** Questions and comments?

**Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin):** I'm intrigued by the minister's words today. What this is really about is downloading the responsibility and the having to pay for library services to the already overburdened municipal taxpayer.

We know that in this so-called wash the cost of this municipal downloading is at least \$1 billion, and that is being charitable. We know this government has disregarded the comments of people like David Crombie. We know what they are about to do and what they are doing is at total odds with every recommendation made.

I wonder if sometimes the ministers of the crown have been out into communities like Manitoulin, Espanola, Elliot Lake, Spanish, Massey, where library services are very important but very difficult to provide. I know, because I've received petitions and letters from librarians throughout the constituency, that this is not what they wanted to happen, Minister. This is, I repeat, not what the people who were concerned with library services wanted to happen.

They did not want to see user fees introduced in a big way. They did not want to see library services curtailed, because many of our libraries in the smaller communities are not going to be able to exist. When municipal councillors have to choose between fixing the pothole and providing library services, I know which one they're going to choose, and it won't be library services. From a government that doesn't believe libraries are part of the educational system, I find this incredible.

**Mr Tony Silipo (Dovercourt):** I'll have the chance to speak on this bill a little bit later on, but I just want to make a couple of comments and actually ask the minister if she would answer a couple of questions. There are three statements she made that I have to say I agree with. The first statement she made was that she's proud, as I am, of our public libraries. The second is that our public libraries have kept pace with the information revolution. The third is that free access to information has been and continues to be the cornerstone of the system.

1540

With that in mind, I would like the minister to tell me, please, why it is that a fundamental part of this bill is to actually do away with the protection that now exists in legislation for free access to the use of libraries and free access to the borrowing of materials. That provision, as you may know and as the minister surely will know, is being taken out of the legislation and put under regulation in a watered-down version, because only certain things, such as the borrowing of print materials, will be allowed under the new regulation, and that, in and of itself, by regulation.

If that is such a fundamental principle, I wonder if the minister would comment on why she's taking this out of the legislation and putting it into a regulation, where it can be changed with a quick decision by cabinet, as opposed to the fundamental protection that exists now in the legislation and which in our view should continue to exist in the legislation.

**Mr John O'Toole (Durham East):** It's a pleasure to rise today in support of what I consider our minister's very progressive piece of legislation, Bill 109, overdue amendments to the Libraries Act. In review of that, I spoke to our local chief librarian, Cynthia Mearns, and she was supportive. She recognized that there were challenging times in the economy today and she also was quick to point out to me that today the grants to the local governments of libraries have been steadily declining over many years and many governments.

But she was also pleased to say that the municipalities now had control over their own library boards and that there were still at arm's length library boards dealing with the governance of and fair access to library services. The minister has protected the very cornerstone of libraries in Ontario. That is access to free books and loans and access to our libraries and the ambience they provide our citizens. I'm speaking very much in support of this, along with, I might add, many of the municipal leaders and the librarians throughout Ontario.

Terry Mundell was quoted in the Ottawa Citizen on January 16 stating he welcomes the change and does not believe budgets will be decreased as a result. So I believe our municipal partners are fully responsible for the important service that libraries provide for not only our students, but our senior citizens and indeed a wide range and wide variety of our citizens in Ontario.

The minister has consulted broadly — I know that; I've spoken to her directly — and she's listened. She's come up with what I consider a fair and reasonable solution to libraries in Ontario, ensuring full and free access, but also affordability.

**M. Jean-Marc Lalonde (Prescott et Russell) :** Encore une fois cela demande que le gouvernement veuille transférer tous les services aux municipalités, mais aussi sans leur donner le pouvoir. Encore une fois aujourd'hui, cela demande que nous retirions des fonds qui étaient déjà garantis aux municipalités, des fonds qui étaient de très grande importance pour l'éducation, surtout chez nos jeunes. Lorsque nos jeunes doivent entreprendre des recherches, ils se rendent à la bibliothèque publique. On fait les recherches et ensuite nous complétons notre devoir, nos recherches que nous avions à compléter.

Mais aujourd'hui, avec ce transfert, où nous donnons la responsabilité aux municipalités, cela demande que le prêt de livres qui fonctionne actuellement entre les municipalités va cesser. Je crois que les municipalités, lorsqu'ils prendront la décision soit de réparer les routes ou d'améliorer les services à la bibliothèque, c'est définitivement la bibliothèque qui va en souffrir. J'ai toujours dit, une ville sans bibliothèque, c'est une ville morte. Encore une fois, cela demande que le gouvernement n'a aucun respect envers les personnes qui doivent se servir bibliothèques à tous les jours ou à toutes les semaines, selon le temps qui le leur permet aussi. La



lecture est très importante. C'est un point d'éducation qu'on doit regarder chez nos jeunes et aussi bien chez nos adultes, qui veulent se dire à date avec l'évolution de notre pays.

Encore une fois, je crois que c'est une très méchante décision de la part de ce gouvernement de transférer la responsabilité à 100 %. Même si nous avons la responsabilité, du moins on devra avoir les fonds nécessaires pour sauvegarder les bibliothèques, surtout dans le secteur rural.

**The Acting Speaker:** The minister has two minutes to respond.

**Hon Ms Mushinski:** In response to the honourable member for Dovercourt, I might remind him that under Bill 26 all boards were given control to charge fees. What this regulation actually does is limit a library's ability to charge fees for basic book borrowing and access to libraries. Because municipalities will now have control over local libraries, which is what the Who Does What process was really all about, access must be given under the regulation under the Municipal Act. That's the reason that was done.

I would remind him that the whole purpose of the consultation process, and the message that we heard through the consultation process, was that we must protect the basic underpinnings of public library service, which are free access and free book loans. That's what this bill contains. That's what was recommended by the Crombie commission. We believed all along that it was sacrosanct to the basic requirement of public libraries. Clearly, we have listened to that consultation process and we have enshrined it within the act that's before us today.

**The Acting Speaker:** Further debate?

**Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt):** At the outset, our critic on libraries will be, with unanimous consent of the House, doing the 90-minute portion of the address at a later time. I wonder if we might have unanimous consent that that 90 minutes —

**The Acting Speaker:** Agreed? Agreed.

**Mr Phillips:** I'm pleased to join the debate on Bill 109 and to say to the minister that I think she appropriately put it in context, which is that it's part of an overall government program following the Who Does What committee's report. I think by now the public is aware that these are a few of the bills we're dealing with as a result of it. There are probably about 12 or 13 quite major bills in the Legislature or at committee now that comprise the package on the government restructuring. This bill deals with libraries.

The minister appropriately outlined the two major changes this bill implements. Just to express some concerns about those two major changes, one is that the bill does indeed ensure that if you are looking to access a book, printed material, you will continue to be able to do that free of charge. That goes back to the history of libraries, which were designed to ensure that all of the people in the community, regardless of wealth or income, had reasonable access to books, literature and things like that.

We are now, as we all know, in an era of technology. The printed book will still be with us in the future, but the growth is in electronic information. As a matter of

fact, the minister said that the big innovation in libraries is a province-wide electronic linkup between libraries. So it's no accident that yes, you will in the future, I gather by regulation — and the public should recognize that legislation requires a debate and something to happen publicly. Regulations can be changed like that. The only way you even know about it is if you read some obscure document called the Ontario Gazette, which comes out on a Saturday, strangely enough, and you find out there that the regulations have changed.

The thing that is protected only by regulation is that you can borrow books freely, but now your access to all of the electronic — the future, the whole growth area — will depend on your wealth. Believe me, libraries are right now and will in the future be in a constant battle for resources because the second thing that this does, without any doubt, is put libraries in the hands — total control — of councils.

That's what municipalities wanted; that's what they've got. That's what this bill does. There is no doubt about that. That's what the minister said. But now the two things that in the past have attempted to make sure that our communities — the libraries, which have a long-standing tradition, in communities, of volunteers making sure that everyone had access to written information, now will be totally in the hands of the municipalities, the councils, and that's clear from the bill. Now obviously it will be fighting for its resources with all the other demands on the municipal taxpayer.

1550

This is where I come to the important part of my comments, that this Bill 109 has to be put in the context of the whole package because that's how the government is proceeding. You've heard the terms and the public has heard the terms "mega-week," "mega-change." There is no doubt that Ontario is going through the most fundamental, dramatic change in its history, and part of that change is that the province, by its own admission, has decided to take education off the residential property taxpayers, and children's aid and women's shelters, but they've added far more than they've taken off. The government has said they're going to add another \$1 billion of costs. The municipal leaders in this province say it's probably more like \$1.4 billion. But suddenly now a whole bunch of new costs are on the property taxpayers, and I might add the biggest costs are for senior citizens' care.

Long-term care now is going on property tax. That used to be handled by the province. Let's recognize that well over half of all our social housing, our publicly assisted housing, is for seniors. In many communities, 70% to 80% of the housing is for seniors. That used to be handled by the province. Now all that is going on to the property taxpayer.

Public health programs, heavily designed for helping in preserving good health, all that is now moving on to the property tax. All the ambulance services, 100% of the ambulance services is now moving on to the property tax. Our special care homes are all moving on to the property tax, and our child care and our social assistance. Recognize that our social assistance is basically for children and seniors — that is the majority of the people



on social assistance — and is moving heavily on to property tax.

The reason I raise that is that the government has made, in our opinion, a major mistake. They have decided that they are going to put on to the property tax some of the most sensitive social services: long-term care for seniors, ambulance services, social housing. I repeat for the community out there that the majority of social housing is for needy, deserving seniors who, just in order to survive, require this assistance. All that is going on to the property tax.

The minister said in her earlier remarks that this Bill 109 on the public libraries was in response to what's called the Who Does What panel, the David Crombie panel that you've heard about. That was a handpicked panel by the Premier. The Premier picked Mr Crombie and I think 14 other individuals from around the province, well-respected people, and said to them, "Tell us the services we should be handling provincially; tell us the services we should be handling municipally."

Here's what Mr Crombie said and here's what his panel said in response to this downloading, moving long-term care, social housing, child care, ambulance services on to the property tax.

First he said: "If you do that, you will undo much of the work that would be accomplished by the disentangling proposals." In other words, by doing this you're undoing this plan, to use the jargon we use around here, to disentangle, which simply means to try to get one level of government responsible solely for things.

Then he goes on to say about moving health and welfare on to property tax: "The panel strongly opposes such a move. We are unanimous in the view that if there's a choice between placing education or health and welfare on the property tax, it's clearly preferable to continue to rely on the property tax for the funding of education."

The reason I go through this is that the province has made for whatever reason a big mistake, a huge mistake, and David Crombie and his panel — that was a hand-picked panel of some of the most respected people in Ontario — are saying it's wrong.

Our caucus, the Liberal caucus, has been travelling around the province in the last few weeks meeting with municipal leaders. I was in Sarnia and London last Friday. Unanimously, without exception — and these are mayors and wardens and reeves and regional chairs and community leaders, chambers of commerce — they all say that this is a big mistake. The board of trade here in Metropolitan Toronto, the United Way, everywhere across the province they said you've made a big mistake.

I think the government is beginning to recognize it. Certainly Mr Crombie, as I read the paper this morning, is trying his best to pull together something that will save the government from itself. In my opinion, some time in November or December, by mistake perhaps — I don't want to sound overly provocative here, but I think in many respects by incompetence — this proposal got out there. You cannot find one single credible organization — I'll have to be careful of that; I haven't found one single credible organization — anywhere in the province that supports this.

The Globe and Mail had I thought a very thoughtful editorial on it, so did the Sun, so did the Star, the three daily papers here in my home community of Metropolitan Toronto.

I say that this bill is part of a package, and if this package goes ahead and if libraries are going to have to compete with — and, believe me, it's almost cruel that the province has decided to move our most vulnerable, our most sensitive services off the province and on to the property taxpayer.

We all know the area that is going to grow in demand over the next decade. It's our seniors. Everybody in this Legislature knows that. One of our huge challenges is how we are going to make certain that as our society ages, and we all know the demographics — that is going to increase dramatically. I think it's either an honest mistake or incompetence, or it's worse: a deliberate attempt to move an area that we know the cost is going to go up on, we know the services are going to increase in demand, and put them on to the property taxpayer.

Every single councillor, mayor, chair, regional chair and warden said to us: "We know what's going to happen. Our future council meetings are going to be with our property taxpayers saying, 'We can't afford property taxes going up,' and our seniors saying, 'In our community we do not have enough services.'" As a matter of fact, in today's newspapers the waiting list now, I gather, is 16,000 in Ontario. We're going to move that on to property tax? Does anybody here in the Legislature, apart from the cabinet, think that's a good idea? Certainly nobody I've run into in any of the community leadership positions around the province believes it's a good idea.

1600

As I say, the one possible encouraging piece of news, because overwhelmingly there's a recognition this is a huge mistake, is that now I find Mr Crombie trying to work with some people to pull something together. I hope AMO is able to persuade the government that this is a bad move and get this reversed, because to put these services on the property tax — and I will add that without any question of a doubt the government has said it is prepared to have some funds to help out. We've looked at the funds, the municipal leaders have looked at the funds, and when everything clears, the province is prepared to put about \$335 million of extra revenue in and is adding \$1.3 billion of extra costs. So you are adding \$1 billion of new costs on to the property taxpayer.

We met last week with the financial officials from the municipalities. When we met around the province with the mayors, the reeves, the wardens and the regional chairs, every one of them had had their officials go through this in detail. The county of Elgin had perhaps the most comprehensive series of numbers I've seen, and every single one of them shows a residential property tax increase of at least 10%, and that's after the provision of those funds.

The reason I raise that issue is that this is a package. We have to, because that's the way the rules work around here, deal with each of these bills individually. I think it's tragic, and that's what we heard also. People are saying, "Listen, we've got to pull all of this together." We're



dealing with Bill 103, which is the amalgamation of Metro; Bill 104, which you've heard about, is the fundamental changes in education; Bill 105 is the policing; Bill 106 is going to change property tax like we've never seen it before.

I say to all of us: Wait till that one finally hits. The province has said, "We're going to eliminate something called the business occupancy tax." They're saying that's gone. Some people are saying, "Thank you very much," but it is 11% of all the tax revenue for municipalities. This wasn't something the province gave up. It was a gift from the province to the business community, but totally on the back of the municipalities. They've cut out \$1.6 billion of revenue for municipalities and said, "Make it up somewhere else." It's going to be added right on to the property taxpayers — residential property taxpayers and the commercial-industrial property taxpayers.

We are making a big mistake here of dealing with each of these bills as if they were independent and didn't all come together as a package. If I were in the back bench of the government, I would be saying to them, "Please tell me what this is going to mean when all these bills are passed and the property tax bill goes out some time about a year from now." It's going to go out to the residences probably in about April 1998. Luckily, Hansard here prints everything and I can keep a copy of it. I will say: "I warned you. You should have gone to Mr Leach" — I should use the proper terminology — "the Minister of Municipal Affairs and said, 'Please tell me what this is going to mean when all of this gets done.'" I have my own opinion, which I'm sharing with you, but you make your own minds up, obviously.

We have done the analysis in conjunction with municipalities and it is very clear that they are saying to us and to you that this downloading is going to add probably at least 10% to municipal residential property taxpayers in Ontario.

The library bill does something that the councils have wanted, and that is that they want control. Councils do not like bodies that they do not have control over influencing their budget, and that's understandable. It's understandable that if they're going to be held accountable, they want to be in control of the budget. If they've got to raise the money, they don't like these independent bodies.

But I might add that the councils are saying: "Wait a minute. On the one hand you're now giving us the authority to get control of the \$20 million you used to spend." But the provincial government has decided it's going to add two new costs to the municipal taxpayers, and I gather they'll have no control over it. Long-term care: The province will simply say: "You spend that amount on long-term care. Secondly, you give us that amount of money on the education property taxes on businesses."

This is going to be very interesting. I mentioned earlier that the province has taken education off the residential property taxpayer and left it on the business taxes. For the first time ever in the history of Ontario, the province is going to be essentially levying a property tax, in this case an education property tax on businesses. When the business community finally realizes the impact of that

and the business occupancy tax, it will be interesting. The reason I raise that is that the councils will thank you for giving them complete control of the libraries but it is within the context of all the other things that they are going to have to now pick up from the province.

The second thing I'd say is that if the purpose of libraries is to ensure that regardless of income individuals in our society had access to educational materials, there's no one who does not believe — I don't think there's anyone — that the future of educational materials rests in new forms of provision, electronic forms, not the historical printed book. For the first time in the history of Ontario, at least probably in the last 100 years, we've decided that for many people access to the new form of information will be dependent on your paying a fee.

The reason I appreciated the minister and her remark that this is part of a package is because I think we have to view it as part of a package. I think we're making a huge mistake, and certainly the councils around the province believe we're making a huge mistake, trying to deal with this thing individually.

1610

Some of these bills talk about jobs and job creation right in the title. I would say that as we're proceeding with these bills, on the belief that these things are driving job increases, I would once again remind us that, for whatever reason, Ontario is struggling right now on the job creation front. The tax cut, for whatever reason, has yet to produce the jobs. I repeat what I've said before. I was shocked when the government released its report dated February 14, and we got it on February 18. Ontario lost 7,000 jobs in January. We've lost 37,000 jobs in the last five months in Ontario. Everybody who's looked at that is scratching their heads, wondering what's happening. Why is it that we've lost 37,000 jobs in the province of Ontario?

**Mr Michael Brown:** What are the forecasts for Ontario?

**Mr Phillips:** My colleague says, "What are the forecasts for Ontario?" The government told us in the Common Sense Revolution, and it was unequivocal, "This plan will create more than 725,000 new jobs over the next five years." That's about 12,000 jobs a month. Losing 37,000 jobs in the last five months, believe me, is a shock to anyone who has looked at it. The rest of Canada, by the way, has gained 72,000 jobs. It cannot continue at that level.

The government promised the people, "If you go through all this pain of the cuts" — the tax cut cost the province \$5.5 billion a year in revenue; that's what the government said; that's about 10% of the revenue — "if you do that, we will see 145,000 jobs a year created." I keep a little chart for myself of where the government said we would be and where we are. The government has now been in office 19 months; 12,000 jobs a month is 228,000 jobs. Actually, in the 19 months, 97,000 jobs have been created; there's a shortfall of 131,000. It has been 19 months of disappointment.

**Mr O'Toole:** Gerry, you know the economics —

**Mr Phillips:** The members of the public can't hear it, but the members across the way are barracking somewhat.



It was the promise of the 725,000 jobs that I think got Mike Harris elected. It wasn't "We hope" or "We think"; it was, "This plan will create more than 725,000 jobs." What we've found so far is an extremely disappointing performance, and I have said this. This morning, in the finance and economic affairs committee, we had the same discussion.

Perhaps the most concerning part is the unemployment rate among our young people, and this is what your own document dated February 14 said, that in January 1997 the Ontario youth unemployment rate was 18.6%, up 2.3% from January 1996. I have not seen that number, I have not seen a number as high as that among our young people in my memory in Ontario, and 2.3% higher than it was a year ago.

These disastrous numbers cannot continue. They have to pick up. It is impossible to continue at that rate. Certainly, it is so far extremely disappointing, because what the people of Ontario have been told is, "You go through all of this pain, the pain of cuts in services, the pain of cuts" — and there's no doubt that the government has decided it's going to cut 20% from hospital funding. There's not a community in this province that isn't going to be touched by hospital closings.

On that front, they've been told by the person they put in charge of the restructuring, Mr Sinclair, they've been told by their own group — they have a government group working with the hospitals — they've been told by the communities: "This is not right. You can't cut 20% from hospitals over that short a period of time and hope to have any sensible operation in our hospitals. It just can't be done."

**Mr Michael Brown:** The Premier promised.

**Mr Phillips:** One of my colleagues said the Premier, when he was running in the election, promised he'd close no hospitals.

You can't cut 20% from hospitals in that period of time and hope they can run properly. All of us have hospitals in our communities, all of us talk to the people who are on those boards and trying to run those hospitals, and they will tell you that they are being put in a position where the very health, the very lives of the people they're trying to look after are being jeopardized.

The reason I raise that is that this is part of the package. The government is committed to a 30% cut in personal income tax. I understand that, but what it means for the people of Ontario is far deeper cuts in services, and now perhaps for the first time Ontario is beginning to say: "Wait a minute. What is happening here? Yes, I voted for the Conservatives. They won a majority."

**Mr Tom Froese (St Catharines-Brock):** You did what? I thought so.

*Interjections.*

**Mr Phillips:** You've got to listen carefully. I certainly didn't vote for the Conservatives. I said many people will say to me: "Listen, I voted for the Conservatives, but what is happening? I didn't realize that by voting for them it would mean this closing of hospitals, cuts in hospital care that are beyond what anybody in the health care sector would say is reasonable."

Even those who favour restructuring would say you are doing it incorrectly. Why are you doing it? Because you've got to fund a \$5.5-billion tax cut.

I think the public now recognizes that the government has made a big mistake. For whatever reason, they've made a big mistake. They should never, ever be downloading long-term care, seniors' care, ambulance services, child care, social assistance for our young people on to the property tax. They should never be put there. It has to be changed.

This is part of this package and as we are being forced to ram this stuff through in a short period of time, it's a big mistake. The government should do what the public is saying to do: slow down and look at this whole package, because we're on the road to a very major problem in Ontario.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley):** Questions or comments?

**Mr Tony Silipo (Dovercourt):** I want to express my congratulations and appreciation to the member for Scarborough-Agincourt for having so clearly, as he has done, outlined the clear connection between this bill, Bill 109, which purports to make some major changes to the library system in this province, and the rest of the Who Does What package this government has brought about. As he mentioned, the minister herself in her opening comments acknowledged and pointed out that this was part of a larger legislative framework.

This particular bill begs the questions: Why is it here? Who's asked for this? What's the big problem this bill is trying to deal with and trying to fix, particularly when we have other pressing issues we should be dealing with?

Of course we know, as the member for Scarborough-Agincourt has pointed out, that this is part of the whole downloading framework this government has set out to put in place.

We are seeing that being rejected by people across this province. We are seeing municipality after municipality continue to express their outrage at what this government is doing. I look forward to the discussion on this bill in the hearings we will have to hear what people have to say specifically on this, but also to ensure that people understand the connection with the downloading of some \$24 million here in this bill and how it connects to the downloading of billions of dollars under the other measures this government has taking place. You and I, Speaker, are quite involved in Bill 103, which is one of the other major issues going on right now, and Bill 104, the education bill, which is also in front of the Legislature as we speak.

These measures, together with others, all have to do with finding \$3 billion so that Mike Harris can pay for his tax cut. They have nothing to do with improving the system, with making the system better or fairer or more equitable across the province. They have to do with making the rich richer and making the rest of us poorer. That's what the bottom line is all about.

**Mrs Brenda Elliott (Guelph):** As a former teacher and librarian, I think I can speak to this bill and on this area with some knowledge and passion. It's my pleasure to speak in support of the Local Control of Public Libraries Act. In my view the minister has crafted this legislation carefully with exactly the right focus. She's ensuring that free access to all library materials and free book borrowing is protected. She's following the true



spirit of determining who does what in this province by giving municipalities the greatest responsibility for management. Municipalities can, once and for all, determine the nature of their boards: the citizen composition, the qualifications, the size and the rules of operation.

1620

The efficient and wise running of Ontario libraries is important to all of the citizens in this province, regardless of their age, interests, sex, race or religion. It's important to students who are looking for data. It's important for people in the workforce who are looking for changes. For most of us it's our greatest source of recreational reading material.

When I was a shopkeeper in downtown Guelph I noticed an interesting phenomena. Many of the families in Guelph would begin their Saturday mornings by going to the market. They would then do a bit of miscellaneous shopping, go to the library with their children and then go out for a snack or coffee. I think there are many families across the province who find going to the library a cherished part of their family traditions. It's interesting to note that in an increased era of video and computer presence, more and more books are being read by Ontarians.

I very much want to speak in support of this bill. I think it is exactly the right way to do this, because our government acknowledges that a very strong role for libraries in the province is important to all of us.

**Mr Michael Brown:** The first thing I would like to do is commend the member for Scarborough-Agincourt for his very interesting presentation. He's known around this Legislature and around the province as the authority on financial affairs in this province, and he has put this bill into context.

I have to tell you, one of the things that struck me about his speech was the government's attack on seniors. I say that because I think about the city of Elliot Lake, one that has reborn itself as one of the leading retirement communities in Canada. One of the things that Barb Fazekas, the librarian in Elliot Lake, has told me is that since having the seniors move to Elliot Lake in big numbers there has been a huge increase in the use of the public library service. That doesn't surprise me. Obviously, seniors have a fair amount of leisure time and would want to avail themselves of the materials at the Elliot Lake library.

It seems to me that when we attack seniors, we attack those people in our society who have paid their dues and are now rightfully looking forward to retirement. They've moved to communities like Elliot Lake where they've become a vital part of the community. They are entitled to those services and they are entitled to know that in Elliot Lake they can have long-term care. That means nursing homes. It means nursing home beds, which we've been fighting for in Elliot Lake for many years. It means maintaining the hospital services, which are being cut again. It means having a vital community, which means not destroying the Oaks detox centre, where many of the community's jobs reside. Those are the things that concern my constituents. The member for Scarborough-Agincourt has put this particular bill into the larger context.

**Mr Derwyn Shea (High Park-Swansea):** I have consummate respect for my colleague from Scarborough-Agincourt, who is a solid and thoughtful member of this House. I listened to his comments with great interest. He is on error in several points. I would be remiss if I didn't correct him and I think he'd appreciate that.

In terms of the roughly \$6 billion that is coming off the property tax and the \$6 billion that's going back on, he will know, as I and many others do, that the government has indicated the appointment of a committee which consists of a number of people who are well recognized in their communities, including the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, to ensure that the balance is fair and equal and revenue-neutral.

The concern that my colleague expresses, that it may require additional taxes, is flawed. There won't be additional taxes. He recognizes that in his quote. The words that I took out very clearly were, "The councils will thank you for giving them full control over their libraries." That is what's happening. The response generally across the province is one of appreciation, acknowledgement that it is the appropriate thing to do. How on earth can you suggest that elected representatives are not going to do what the community wants them to do?

The fact is that they will be responsive to their rate-payers. I go further, to suggest that if there are any materials that you might conceivably charge for, other than books and so forth, I think the option is there right now, as it will continue in this bill, to allow the board to dispense with any fees that may be involved, whether it be for electronic media or anything else. The fact is that this bill gives them the ability to respond appropriately to the needs of a local community and it should be supported.

**The Acting Speaker:** The member for Scarborough-Agincourt.

**Mr Phillips:** I appreciate the comments. I have a lot of confidence in the municipal leaders and it is they who are telling us that you have downloaded \$1.3 billion on to them. We've met with literally dozens of mayors and reeves and financial officials; it's them. The government itself has acknowledged that you're adding at least \$900 million of extra costs, and then the municipalities say you're adding \$455 million more. I might add that I've been trying to get the government to confirm those numbers, but I can't. No one will return my calls. These are the municipal leaders who are telling us this.

Then the government says, "Yes, but we're going to make up for it in money." The OHA, the Ontario Hospital Association, thought it could trust you too. Then it came and said: "Listen, what you're doing on hospitals is wrong. We should have spoken up months or years ago." The municipal leaders are saying the same thing. All the government has said is, "We'll have a \$1-billion fund" — that's all it said — "but we're going to cut another \$666-million fund out." The government has been very clear on that. So the municipal leaders say to us, "We believe, based on all of our analysis and everything we've heard, that you've added \$1.3 billion of cost, and based on everything you've told us, you're giving us \$330 million more revenue, so it's \$1 billion."

Those are not my numbers. Those are the municipal leaders in the province. They put enough heat on the



government. The government finally has said, "We better begin to admit we've made a mistake." You have made a mistake and you've got to change it.

**The Acting Speaker:** Further debate?

**Mr Silipo:** I'm pleased to have the chance to lead off debate on this bill for our caucus as the critic responsible, but I would like to ask for unanimous consent to split the leadoff time with my colleague from Fort York.

**The Acting Speaker:** Agreed? Agreed.

**Mr Silipo:** I thank the members of the House.

I want to talk about this legislation. I want to assure members of the House that although, like the member for Scarborough-Agincourt, I believe strongly that there is a very clear link — the minister herself talked about it in her opening comments — between this bill and other measures that this government is taking to, as they would put it, shift and streamline costs or, as we would put it, to download on to municipalities a number of costs far beyond those that are being brought up to the provincial level in the way of the education costs that are now on the property tax, while I want to speak about that connection, I actually want to start my comments by commenting in some level of detail on some of the key points that have touched on Bill 109.

I think there are within Bill 109 some important issues that in and of themselves are significant and I would not want this debate to go by without those being put on the record and on to the floor of this Legislature and without us having a chance to debate those issues, both here in second reading debate and in the committee process that I gather will ensue. I understand that the government has agreed that this bill should go to committee and it's my understanding that it will go to committee during the week of April 7.

We'll have the opportunity, I hope, to also hear from people, hear from organizations like the Ontario Library Trustees Association, like the Canadian Union of Public Employees, like many of the representatives of different library boards across the province who have already written to us, to me certainly as the critic for our party and I assume to other members of the House, expressing their concerns about what the government is doing. Even though some of those letters go back to before the government introduced this piece of legislation and were responding to the Who Does What recommendations, the fact that this piece of legislation by and large reflects the recommendations of the David Crombie panel still, in my mind, makes it clear that a number of major concerns still exist that have not been addressed by this legislation, in fact have been rendered worse by this legislation. I think it's important that those be brought to the fore and debated during this process.

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I look forward to hearing from those organizations and those individuals who, like me, believe very strongly that our public library system needs to continue to be supported, indeed needs to continue to be encouraged to grow, not diminished. I hope they will come forward and speak to us during the recommendations. It was the Ontario Library Trustees Association which, in writing to us, said they want us as legislators to work to strengthen, not dismantle, the current legislative and ministerial support for our public library system.

If you listened to the minister in her opening comments today, you would think that's what this bill does; you would think this bill strengthens the library system in this province. I want to say categorically that in my view this bill seriously endangers the public library system as we know it today. I want to get into some detail about why I believe that.

But first I have to ask the question of why this bill is even before us. Why do we have a bill in front of this House that purports on the one hand to improve the library system in this province and yet removes a number of basic protections, like the one on fees that I will talk about as well, and therefore renders the system weaker if this legislation is passed; while at the same time we have other issues that are far more pressing where there are some real problems that could be fixed and should be fixed?

We've heard the Minister of Transportation talk about his wish that we get on with some legislation he has presented that would improve highway safety. I have to ask as an opposition member: Why are we in this House debating a bill that is going to weaken the library system in this province rather than being here debating a system that would strengthen the protection of drivers on our highways and strengthen highway safety for all who use our public highways across this province? That's just this one example.

The answer I've come to is that this bill, as the minister put it, is part of a larger legislative framework which does not intend, which does not have as its objective in this case, to improve the public library system or to improve through the other bills the quality of decision-making that goes on at the local level, or indeed the responsibilities between the local level of government and the provincial level of government, but has very clearly a role to play in that larger legislative framework which has as its objective finding \$3 billion out of the public purse, out of the public coffers, out of taxpayers' moneys, to be used by Mike Harris and company to fund their infamous tax scheme. It has everything to do with that. It has nothing to do with improving the library system in this province.

It has nothing to do with improving the library system of this province. If it did, you would not see the kinds of changes that are being made in this bill. I want to talk about some of those changes.

One of the things that's happening as a result of this bill and, again, part of the background the minister painted for us is that this — and this is probably one of the few areas where I can actually say the title of the bill is correct. We know how mischievous at times even this government has been in terms of the titles they've put on their bills, but I have to say this one is closer to being correct.

It talks about giving responsibility and authority at the local level for managing the local library system. It does that indeed, but in doing so it takes away some basic protections. It is taking away some basic protections that exist now with respect to fees; it is taking away some basic protections that exist now with respect to the independence of library boards, with a citizen majority on those boards; it is going to decrease, not increase the role



of volunteers in the system; it is going to mean that the government is stepping out of its role to ensure capital for the continued upkeep and maintenance and building and rebuilding of our libraries; and it does a great injustice to what should be a strong provincial interest in our library system across this province. I want to talk about some of those issues.

The independent library system: We have had a history in this province of having our libraries run by independent library boards, made up of elected councillors but by a majority made up of citizen members appointed by the local councils, in some cases by the school boards. That is going to change. It will still be possible if the local council decides to do that, but that basic protection will no longer be there if this bill is adopted. One of the things this government is doing in giving complete control to municipalities on this front is that it's doing away with that basic tenet that has made the public library system in this province the great system we know it to be and the great system the minister says she's proud of.

I read with interest the comments of the Ontario Library Trustees Association on this point. Let's be clear: We are talking here about people who serve on these boards on a volunteer basis. We are not talking about paid trustees; we are talking about people who give freely of their time to sit on library boards to ensure that the systems they have responsibility for run effectively, efficiently, with due respect for the sense of community those people are part of and that therefore serve the needs of those communities.

They are in the best position to deal with that, to deal with issues that have to do with libraries, with running those libraries, and they do that in a way that still maintains accountability to the local councils. I want to come back to that point, but I want to make that point now.

One of the notions we are getting from the government on this is that by making these changes, they are putting greater accountability for the expenditure of funds on to the municipal councils. While they will be to the extent that the councils will now have to come up with 100% of the funding for the library system, because the \$24 million the province now spends to help fund libraries across the province will no longer be there — that will be phased out as part of this exchange of funding, as part of this downloading on to municipalities — that will, among other things, put incredible pressure on municipal councils as they have to deal with the growing costs in other areas, long-term care being just one example. It will put great pressure on them to be able to continue the level of funding they now provide to public libraries.

Let there be no mistake: If this government purports through this bill to give municipalities complete control of the budgets of public libraries, then you either don't understand the bill or there's been a serious misreading of the bill. Your own notes point out that this control exists there today. The budgets of public libraries today are controlled 100% by local councils. Yes, there is a contribution from the ministry, from the provincial government, but municipal councils have line-by-line jurisdiction over the budgets of public libraries. That is not going to change, but then you don't need a piece of legislation if you're not going to change that basic premise.

Coming back then to the relationship that exists now and that is being broken between the municipal council and the local independent library boards, which are made up now of a majority of citizen members, what is the value and what are we losing by taking that away? The value is that by having that independence, decisions that are made about the library system, the information that's available, the books, but all of the other information that's available — are made, as they should be, in an arm's-length way, removed from the day-to-day activities that municipal councillors have to involve themselves in.

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It's important to note here the comments that I have received from the Ontario Library Trustees Association, and I assume other members of this House have received, as they look at the experience of other jurisdictions that have tried to muck around with this very basic concept of the independence of library boards. They say that it's interesting to note that the provinces with the strongest public library systems are those where independent public library boards govern public libraries, and they point us to a couple of experiences in different parts of Canada.

They point to Alberta, which recently tried to dally with the concept of a legislative change in this area, but as a result of public discussions, public consensus there was for the retention of this governance model. There at least the government of the day listened to people, and I want to say I hope this government will listen to people out there if we, as I expect we will, hear from many individuals that this important tenet of the public library system should continue and not be done away with for the sake of just giving municipalities the power to do what they want.

British Columbia is given as another example of where libraries and library boards are alive and well, because there exists and continues to exist to this day this independent library board system. Contrast that, according to the Ontario Library Trustees Association, with the situation in Quebec, where public libraries are administered by municipal councils, with little public voice in their governance. They are considered to be among the most impoverished in Canada.

Another example the association cites, the city of Winnipeg, did not retain its independent library board during municipal amalgamation over a decade ago. Today the disputes among councillors, friends of the library, the emasculated board, library administration and members of the public make for an immense amount of fascinating newspaper copy.

As they point out, even though the Who Does What panel said that they praised the value of public libraries, that panel did not give any strong rationale, in fact did not give any rationale as to why we should do away with public library boards, and particularly why we should do away with a majority of those members being ordinary citizens who, again, as I say, serve on these boards not for any remuneration, volunteer their time free of any pay, simply because they believe in the strength of volunteer boards. Mr Crombie's report did not acknowledge this and did not acknowledge that that is a fundamental part that should continue, and that I think is a major flaw.



This government, I know, has talked many a good line about wanting to see volunteers involved. They have talked about wanting to see volunteers continue to be involved in all facets of public life, and to a large extent I agree with them.

I disagree with them when they go to the point of saying that volunteers should take the place of paid workers. I know that that also is one of the fears that many library workers quite frankly have, and justifiably have, of this piece of legislation: that one of the things that will happen is that as the funding to municipalities gets squeezed, as municipalities have to make choices, one of the choices they will undoubtedly make is to say to the public libraries: "Sorry, we wish we could give you the same amount of money, but we just don't have it any more, because the province isn't giving us all the money that they were giving us before. We don't have all the room that we had before to make up the difference. We have to pay for long-term-care costs. We have to pay for child care costs. I'm sorry. In the equation, you're not the high priority that you were."

That's going to mean less in the way of quality but it's also going to mean a growing pressure for volunteers to do not just the kind of basic volunteer work they do today but also it's going to mean increasing pressure for volunteers to actually pick up some of the work that will come about as a result of layoffs of people who now work in the public library system. That I think is going to happen and I fear it's going to happen unless the government changes its view.

The other contradiction I think the government has to face is that if it believes so fundamentally in the role of volunteers, here is a great place where volunteers are playing a tremendous role, as members of library boards, as friends of libraries in various associations throughout the province.

The letters I have received from those groups and those organizations so far tell me that they're not particularly happy. I know the minister said she's consulted, the parliamentary assistant said he's consulted with people, and they say that they're happy. I'll be interested in knowing who it is who's happy about this bill, because so far I haven't received many letters — I haven't received any letters — that tell me that people are happy about these changes. I've received letters that express a lot of concerns, I've received letters that express a lot of worry about what's going on, I've received letters that express a lot of opposition to what the government is doing following the recommendations of the Who Does What panel, and I think those need to be answered, those need to be addressed.

I hope at least on this issue, which after all, if you look at it in the whole sphere of things, while it's an important part, I think we would all agree it's not the most significant piece of the whole Who Does What process and show, but it is an important piece in terms of how it affects the quality of our library system and it is an important piece in terms of the danger that it poses for the future of our public library system. Therefore, I do hope that at least on this piece the government will be able, through the process, particularly the process of committee hearings, to show some flexibility, to show some ability and some willingness to listen.

But I fear this piece is important politically for them, to be able to say to municipal councils, "See, we've given you the right, we've given you the power to control things in this area at least." What I hope municipal councils are seeing, and what I know they are seeing as they look at this in the whole context of what they are being asked to deal with by this government, is what is being downloaded to them in terms of fiscal responsibilities. I know they are beginning to worry about how they're going to deal with this in the context of everything else they have to do.

I'd like to talk about fees, because to me what the government is doing here on the question of fees is probably the clearest example one can give of why this bill, rather than improving the system, is going to make it worse, and I would say it's going to make it much worse.

We have right now in the present legislation that governs libraries, the Public Libraries Act, a section, section 23, which reads as follows:

"(1) A board shall not make a charge for admission to a public library or for use in the library of the library's materials."

Quite clear. That's subsection 23(1). Subsection (2) reads:

"(2) Every board shall allow the public to,

"(a) reserve and borrow circulating materials that are prescribed or belong to a prescribed class; and

"(b) use reference and information services as the board considers practicable,

"without making any charge."

"(3) A board may impose such fees as it considers proper for,

"(a) services not referred to in subsections (1) and (2);

"(b) the use of the parts of a building that are not being used for public library purposes" — that would involve, for example, meeting rooms — "and

"(c) the use of library services by persons who do not reside in the area of the board's jurisdiction."

Right now there is basic protection in the legislation — and I want to stress both parts of that phrase — there is basic protection and that protection is in the legislation for the use of public libraries that covers circulating materials; not just books, not just print materials, but materials that circulate out of the library. People now are able to borrow materials the library has, are able to go in and use that material, are able to use that material free of charge, are able to borrow that material free of charge. That protection exists in the legislation that now governs public libraries across the province.

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What is this act going to do to that section? First of all, it wipes it out. People need to understand that. It wipes that protection out. The minister can say all she wants in her statement that part of the objective is to protect free access to the library system, but they're taking that provision out of the legislation.

What are they doing instead? They're putting in place a regulation which says that a municipality or local board does not have the power to impose fees or charges for: (a) admission of the public to its libraries; (b) the use of



the public of its libraries collection in the library; (c) — and this is key — borrowing from a public library by residents of books and other printed materials; and (d) borrowing from a public library by or for residents with a disability of materials specially formatted for persons with that disability.

Here is the change. First of all, the protections that now exist in the legislation are being taken out of the legislation. Secondly, the protections that are being put in its place are being put not in another piece of legislation, not in this act that's before us, but in a regulation that's going to be made under the Municipal Act.

People may say: "Well, what's the big deal? Why should anybody be concerned about whether something is in the legislation or is in the regulation?" Those of us who have been around this place, those of us who have had the good fortune — or misfortune, as some would have it — to sit around a cabinet table know exactly the difference, Madam Speaker. You would remember that.

A regulation can be changed by a decision of the provincial cabinet. There is no requirement that anybody else be notified of any change. There is no requirement that anything be brought in here for debate. There is no requirement that the public ever be told until the decision is made. It's not the same level of protection as exists in legislation; it's a very significant change.

The minister's explanation when I asked her about this earlier today was to say: "Well, remember Bill 26? Under Bill 26 we changed all of that so that we put a general power of fee-raising powers to all boards, including library boards, and now we have to limit that power."

I want to say to the minister and to the government, if you are serious about maintaining that basic protection, then keep section 23 of the present legislation, because it will override whatever changes you've made under Bill 26; and if it doesn't as it's presently written, you can make a simple change to that to say that protection will remain in the legislation. I'm not a legislative drafter, but I know it can be done very easily.

What is needed here is the political will by this government to say, if it is serious about maintaining the level of protection, that this level of protection, the free use of our libraries, needs to stay, as it is now, in the legislation, not be removed and put into a regulation, which the cabinet, at its whim, can change without notice to anyone.

But the other important change that's happening is that even in that regulation the protection that exists now is being significantly diluted, because, as you remember, the regulation that's proposed talks about not being able to charge fees for books and other printed material. But what about non-print material? Where is, therefore, the importance that the minister herself just earlier today placed on libraries having kept pace with the information revolution? We know that a library today is not like a library 20 years ago. The materials in the library, in addition to books and the traditional materials, include more and more information that is available and accessible technologically through computer systems. Library boards will be able to charge for that material.

If we are keeping up with the information revolution, then surely access to that information revolution today

needs to be on a par with access to the traditional information, the traditional information being written publications, books, materials, reviews. Today, if much of that information is available on-line, there is no justification for saying that is something we are now going to charge the public for.

I say again to my colleagues across and to the minister and to the parliamentary assistant, if you are serious about maintaining the quality and the level of support and the recognition for our library system, then you will heed the advice you will no doubt hear during the hearings, that that protection should also continue, first of all, to be in the legislation, and secondly, to be as broad as it exists today, because that is also the point that is being made.

That support is being made in the letter I've received from the Ontario Library Trustees Association. They make the point: "The suggestion that libraries should charge for information services such as Internet access belies a lack of understanding of the importance and prevalence of electronic sources of information utilized in public libraries and the central role that access to information plays in the development and maintenance of a democratic society." I couldn't have said it any better.

The basic point is that you can't on the one hand say you believe in the public library system, you can't praise the fact it's kept pace with the information revolution, and then say, "But we're going to make sure libraries and municipalities can charge people to have access to what today is as much a part of the basic service as borrowing a book." I say again to my colleagues that I hope they will listen and look at that as one potential area of change.

The question of independent libraries, the question of volunteers, and the question of fees and user fees that will come out of this if this bill is allowed to stand as it is are three important concerns. I want to mention a couple more.

One of the things that will happen through this change is that the government is phasing out funding for the upkeep of libraries. It's phasing out its contribution of \$24 million. I talked about that earlier. Part of what also is happening — I have to confess that on this one I do not have a clear answer, but it's my sense that this also means the government is washing its hands of its responsibilities to help with the maintenance and building of libraries, the capital costs, not just the day-to-day running of the libraries but the capital costs.

I have to confess I don't know if that's entirely what's going to happen. It's my conclusion from what I've seen that is going to be happening. I want to say to this government, if that's what you're doing, then you're also losing sight of at least one remaining area you should continue to have some involvement in. I look forward to the discussion as it will unfold on that issue.

The Ontario Library Trustees Association points out that capital costs have traditionally been shared by the provincial government with municipal councils and library boards. They also talk about the use of development charges. I know we're dealing with that issue in another bill and we'll be glad to get into that.

The association, and I would agree with them, encourages all of us to continue to ensure that the provincial



government plays a role in the capital cost funding of libraries. In addition to giving them complete responsibility for the running, for the day-to-day costs of the libraries, you cannot saddle municipalities, you cannot also say to them that the capital costs are something they have to be able to bear 100%.

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That brings me to the last point I want to make specifically on the bill in terms of the details, which is what I think the government is doing. I want to come back and talk a little bit more about the connection between this bill and the other actions this government is taking. Specifically within the confines of public libraries, this government is losing sight of the fact that it has an interest and should continue to have an interest, as a provincial government, in the public library system of this province.

I don't think it's enough for the government and the minister to limit their understanding and their responsibility of that provincial interest to simply funding the provincial information network that's part of the public library system or the interlibrary loan service. It goes much deeper than that because the provincial interest should be exactly about the kinds of things I've been pointing out.

The provincial interest should be that the legislative framework that's in place that provides for running our public libraries ensures that there is a system that is going to be, first of all, appropriately funded. That's why the present legislation continues to provide a section that allows for the payment of grants from the Ministry of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation to library boards and municipalities. That needs to continue. There needs to be an understanding that capital costs are something the provincial government needs to continue to be involved with.

There needs to continue to be an understanding and a commitment to the support of the independent public library system and the public library boards with a majority of citizens rather than a majority of local politicians on those boards. That is the best way you will ensure that you have a continued and appropriate role for volunteers, but more significantly, that individual citizens play a key role in the continued evolution of our public library system.

You need to have in place a piece of legislation that has as part of the provincial interest an understanding that our system needs to continue to be free for basic services and that those basic services today are no longer limited to borrowing books, that those basic services today provide through our library system a whole array of materials and that, just as is the case now, those materials are available to people free of charge and that this protection exists in the legislation. Then that provision should continue to be put not into a regulation, not put off where it can be changed at the whim of a decision by a minister or a cabinet, but put into the legislation, left in the legislation because it's there now.

When I look at all these changes being made through this piece of legislation I have to ask myself, why is this bill even before us? Why is this piece of legislation even here? Usually you bring in a piece of legislation to

improve something, to make it better. What we have here is a piece of legislation that takes away protections that exist today.

I may not be personally the most avid user, but I have a son who is a very avid reader, and when we go from time to time to our local public library he likes what's there, he's able to make use of it, as I know many citizens across the province are. I'm not here to give any doomsday stories and say people will no longer be able to use libraries. Of course they will be able to continue to use libraries, but the quality of the service that is being provided is going to be seriously endangered by this bill. I ask myself and I ask members of the government, why is this bill even here? Why is it here when there are so many other more pressing issues that we could be dealing with?

I mentioned earlier the example of the Minister of Transportation wanting, as I think is his right, to get a piece of legislation in front of this House that deals with improving public safety on our roads and highways. Why aren't we debating that bill that would actually make a difference in improving the quality of our highways and the protection for our drivers and passengers on our highways, instead of debating a bill, as we are doing today and as we will be next week, that is going to make the public library system in this province weaker than it is today?

The answer is that this is one of the things this government feels it needs to give to the municipalities as it tries to quieten them down as they understand more and more the implications that are coming from the downloading of services, and as they begin to understand that the downloading of services is going to put them, as municipalities, in an incredibly difficult position in making choices, to have to prioritize because they simply will not be able to continue to fund all the things they are funding now unless they're prepared to raise property taxes. We know that the pressure on them not to raise property taxes today is enormous, therefore what's left for them is to cut. Where are they going to start cutting? They're going to start cutting in the budgets to public libraries. That's what's going to happen if this bill goes through.

I hope that as we go through this process of debate, even municipalities will have the courage to come forward and say: "When we talked about streamlining responsibilities, this is not what we were talking about. We weren't talking about getting the power from Queen's Park to be your hatchet persons. We weren't talking about gaining powers that would allow us to cut basic services like our library service. We were talking about a clear responsibility between the two levels of government."

That's what the disentanglement discussion has been about. It's been rejigged by this government into nothing other than a downloading exercise, nothing other than a push down on to the local tax base of services that don't belong there, particularly services like long-term care, the care for our seniors; particularly services like social assistance; particularly services like child care — three services that are going to continue to grow in their demand and therefore in their call upon the public purse, services that therefore are going to put incredible pressure



on municipal governments to find ways to trim their costs and still maintain a basic level of service. They will not be able to do it because there isn't, at the end of the day, that much fat left in the system; there isn't, at the end of the day, that much ability by the municipal system across —

**Mr Rosario Marchese (Fort York):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: There is not a quorum in the House.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin):** Would you please check if there is a quorum.

**Senior Clerk Assistant and Clerk of Journals (Mr Alex D. McFedries):** A quorum is present, Speaker.

*Interjections.*

**The Deputy Speaker:** It's nice to see a little life in the House, finally. Order.

The member for Dovercourt.

**Mr Silipo:** I will resist the request to start all over again because I know that my colleague from Fort York is going to pick up the balance of the time we have as I wind down my comments.

I wanted to go through both points in the legislation so that members opposite would understand that we have some real concerns about some basic changes that are being made to the public library system in this province. I talked about those changes, particularly the removal of the protection that exists now for no fees to be charged for using the libraries and for borrowing materials, not just print materials but all materials. That protection exists now.

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I've talked also about the need to maintain the independent library boards with citizen majority, and I know my colleague from Fort York will be interested in speaking to this issue, because among the many contributions he has made to public life in the past was a period of time that he served as a member of a public library board, and I think he'll be able to bring that perspective to this debate as well.

I talked also about the need for the government to understand that there is a continuing provincial interest in terms of capital funding, in terms of maintaining an appropriate level of funding in the maintenance and the ongoing operation of our library system, but particularly in terms of ensuring two of the basic tenets of our system of public libraries, the free access and the independent library boards with a majority of citizen members, which are two significant pieces that have made the public library system in this province the high-quality system that it is.

Any move away from those two basic tenets will mean that the system will over time deteriorate because, as I was pointing out, the pressure that will be on municipal councils as they have to make cuts as a result of the downloading of costs on to municipalities that this government is imposing will mean that they will be faced with some very tough choices they'll have to make. Among those choices, I suspect, will be their inability to find the money without resorting to increases in property taxes to be able to keep the present level of funding that is there and which this government, through its actions, is removing.

Twenty-four million dollars is a lot of money. It's not a lot of money in terms of the whole level of funding of

our library system, but it's a level of funding that continues to say the province has an interest in the future of our library system. By removing that, this government is endangering not the existence of our library system — I'm not going to go to that extreme — but the quality of our system as we know it today.

The experiences in other provinces tell us that where the removal of funding has taken place, where the removal of the independent public library boards has taken place, the quality of our system has deteriorated. I would think that at least here is an area where the government should be able to stand up proudly and say, "We are continuing to support our library system," rather than hacking away at this piece. But I suppose I shouldn't be surprised to see them hacking away here, because quite frankly they're hacking away just about everywhere else.

As we go out and talk with people in the four or five days that we will have in committee on this bill, I look forward to hearing not just from the people who run our system but from the people who use our system, from the people who are responsible now for overseeing our system. I hope the government will at least listen and in this area be prepared to make some changes, which after all involve essentially leaving the present legislation as it is.

There isn't a problem here. You don't have to fix anything. What you're doing is breaking something that's working. So don't make any changes; leave it as it is. Continue the level of funding; continue the legislation as it is now. Leave the structures that are in place, and don't muck around and break something that's working.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Further debate?

**Mr Marchese:** I want to continue from where my colleague has left off with respect to Bill 109. There is, I must say, a great deal to add in this particular field. I have been very fortunate in terms of my experience. I was a library board trustee for two years with the Toronto board and it was a very good experience to have had, because one learns the law through that kind of voluntarism that I gave, that many library board trustees gave.

When I first was asked to participate as a trustee with a library board, they talked about one meeting a month. I thought, "One meeting a month isn't too bad; I think I can fit that into my schedule as a teacher." When I went there, I discovered that, yes, there was one meeting a month with the board, but then there were subcommittees of the board, of course, three of them. We were expected to be part of one of those subcommittees, and then there were additional kinds of things that the library board did, such as to visit libraries often to find out what we had in our system, how effective the system was, where there were possible gaps that we needed to fill. So often we went and visited the various libraries that we had in the Toronto system and discovered that it wasn't simply one meeting a month, but it was many meetings a month. We gave of our time to volunteer as part of our civic responsibilities to many of the things that we find important, and libraries are an important part of our community, in some communities more than others.

I'm not sure how often some of our members have had the opportunity to go into our libraries, but I can tell you they are used very frequently by many people of all ages



and of all colours. Why? Because it is a point of access for many people to be able to get material that otherwise might be too costly for many of these individuals. Young people, seniors, people of modest means use libraries as a resource, as a way of getting information that otherwise would be denied to them because they can't afford it. They cannot afford to go elsewhere and buy the material they need.

I have been fortunate to have had that experience because it has taught me a great deal about, first of all, civic involvement in a number of boards, and that was one of them, and it taught me a great deal about our public library system, of which I had very little knowledge before I became a trustee.

But I want to come back to this particular bill, and before I do I want to explain my other involvement in this field as a former Minister of Culture, where I had to deal with a number of these issues that came to our attention. This issue that this government is now dealing with was something that was brought to my attention when I was the minister.

In fact, there was a great deal of pressure from some sectors of the community, particularly municipalities that wanted to have complete control of libraries. As a minister, I resisted that because I knew provincial involvement was critical to the maintenance of three essential principles — universal access, preserving funding and preserving governance — and that if the government abandoned its role, as it is now doing, we would suffer in those three basic principles to which I will speak. Those are preserving universal access, preserving funding and preserving governance, and that is what is at stake here.

When I went there as minister I discovered that the funding that was set aside for libraries had never received its inflationary increase the way some other sectors of the Ministry of Culture, before me, was receiving. In fact, everyone else literally was getting an inflationary increase except libraries. Because of my experience as a library board trustee, I insisted, as the minister, that libraries get their fair share, and during the time I was there libraries were getting their fair share of funding. I must admit, with this government, that's no longer the case.

1720

I will touch on some of these, but I want to begin by going over some of the comments made by our illustrious Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation and try to unpack the nonsense that has been articulated by her in the best way I can. She says that under the new act, Bill 109, municipalities will have full authority to provide and "effectively manage" library services. What does that mean? How does she say this will be accomplished? I know that municipalities will now have the full authority to provide and manage library services, but what makes her qualify it by saying they will provide and "effectively manage"? How does she know? How in the world would she know?

When libraries across Ontario were very fearful of any government doing this, as they were with me and expressed it with me at that time, and were fearful that somehow by giving local control, some of the money that now goes to those libraries would be lost, how could she say municipalities will have full authority to provide and

"effectively manage"? On what basis? On what evidence? On what research? Other than the desire to say to the general public that's listening to this debate that somehow they will effectively manage it. She's relying on nothing really to come to that conclusion. It is not based on anything that is valid. In fact, it's simply pure politics.

I'm looking forward to some of the members responding to my remarks because I'm sure many of you must have good experience in the library field to know and you must be worried. If you're not worried, you can defend your minister as she speaks about "effectively manage" library services. Please defend it for me. I want to be able to hear you somehow come to the same conclusion, presumably relying on some experience you might have. Hopefully you will enlighten me, some of you members who I know are listening very attentively to what I'm saying.

Listen attentively to what your minister is saying, because I am convinced she doesn't have a clue either that what this will do is to deteriorate library services to most of our users. You disciples and apprentices of these fine ministers, you have to listen very carefully to what they're saying, because I tell you, if you're not listening carefully, your apprenticeship may not be all that effective, I argue.

She continues, your illustrious minister, by saying that this this will "both improve" — the delivery of — "library services to the people of Ontario and lower the costs for these services," because local officials know what is best for their communities. What does she mean by this? Again, you disciples of this minister and others, you should be listening to this. I'm convinced your libraries in your small towns are going to have the same worries I do, because this statement makes no sense. They will "improve the delivery of library services." How? How will they do that?

She says it will "lower the costs for these services." How? On what evidence does she make that argument?

The minister I hope is listening. She's not here today to listen to our responses, but I do hope she's listening at the ministry office and that her assistant, who I know well, will pass on my remarks to her.

I have to tell you, Tony, there is nothing in what she said and in this bill that will produce lower costs. Tony, I want you to tell her that. Other than the politics of saying so, there is nothing in this bill that will produce lower costs. What this bill will do is to take funding away from libraries that they have traditionally had. That's what this will do. Tony, will you please pass it on? Thank you very much. It's important to be able to communicate these things.

I am very worried about librarians and their desire to provide accessibility and to provide a modicum of funding that will preserve the universality of that system and preserve the kind of governance that we've had that keeps members who are accountable and distant from political influence.

What this government has done in the last two years is to reduce funding 20% every year. In my time, we were providing approximately \$40 million to libraries; it is now down to \$25 million. The minister never refers to the figures, she simply says, "Well, we provide a modest amount" or "a small amount; it really isn't a great deal."



But she never makes reference to the figure. It used to be \$40 million, it's down to \$25 million in the last two years of her slashing of funding to libraries and she's about to eliminate its funding completely.

In her statement the minister also says that provincial involvement was an unnecessary intrusion. What in the world is she talking about? To the assistant who sits in this House listening to my remarks, I ask you, what is she talking about? How is this an intrusion on libraries? By providing money to libraries that are desperately needed, this minister calls it an unnecessary intrusion?

This is why I say that some of these ministers have no clue what they're doing, because I suspect their speeches are written for them and they don't reflect on what they're reading, because if they did reflect on the speeches that are written for them, they would quickly come to the conclusion that in saying things that are patently untrue, they would look foolish.

**Mr Shea:** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I know you heard that; you were listening intently. I find it passing strange that you would not challenge the member when he suggested that a minister of the crown would say things that are untrue. I ask you to bring the member to order, please.

**The Deputy Speaker:** I'm sure that if the member for Fort York has erred in any way, he will correct it.

**Mr Marchese:** If I did in any way, I would take it back, absolutely, yes.

When the minister argues that provincial involvement is an unnecessary intrusion, I ask you, honourable members, do you understand what she is saying? Do any of you have a clue what she is getting at? Have any of you questioned the remarks of this minister? They make no sense to me. I ask you, does it make any sense to you that the provincial involvement in providing desperately needed funding should be an unnecessary intrusion?

Speaker, I appeal to your sense of judgement as well, because through you I am trying to ask these members to reflect on what the minister has stated here today in the House. I listened attentively because I wanted to know what she was saying. I wanted to be sure that what she was saying had some connection to the reality of the world that she and I share. I tell you, her feet are not firmly rooted to the ground when she makes statements like that. Is that okay, Mr Shea, that her feet are not firmly rooted to the ground? Please, you don't have to stand up. It's okay.

**Mr Shea:** Speaker, if I'm permitted to respond to the hysterical hyperbole, I will, sir.

**The Deputy Speaker:** You can raise a point of order.

**Mr Marchese:** No, there's no point of order here, Mr Speaker. Thank you, Mr Shea.

**The Deputy Speaker:** There's no point of order.

**Mr Marchese:** There's no point of order. Thank you, Mr Shea.

The minister's feet are not firmly rooted to the ground, I tell you that.

For the honourable members' interest here, I've got about 100 letters that were given to me approximately — not approximately; dated March 28, 1996, when they had an inkling that this government might do this evil deed. They were very worried, and I was worried. I had a sense

that this government would do this, and in fact today we see it as a reality.

This is what they said; approximately 100 people here said the following. It's addressed to the Honourable Marilyn Mushinski, Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation, re provincial per-household grant to public libraries.

"I am writing regarding the possibility that the province may cancel all provincial funding to public libraries. It is my belief that the province must continue to play an important role in ensuring that public libraries are regulated provincially. Ontario's public libraries are a rich resource for the educational and information needs of all of our citizens, regardless of income and age. Public libraries are the most widely used institution in any community, more than schools, parks, recreational facilities.

"Provincial grants to public libraries ensure that the people of Ontario receive a basic level of library service through their local libraries. The provincial grant also sustains the province-wide information infrastructure already in place for interlibrary loans. Public libraries are needed more than ever to provide economic strength and quality of life at a time when technology is changing rapidly and job retraining and upgrading are in constant demand.

"The provincial government should not decrease its interest in a well-informed and literate population. With adequate provincial funding, excellent public libraries will continue to meet the needs and interests of all Ontarians, no matter where they reside.

"I urge you to work within cabinet to protect provincial funding for public libraries."

1730

The urgings of these individuals were left unattended and unheard. They urged this minister to go in to cabinet and fight for their interest. It never happened. This minister wasn't there to intervene on their behalf. This minister wasn't there to preserve the provincial funding, to preserve excellent public libraries that will continue to meet the needs of all Ontarians, no matter where they reside.

I tell you this: This minister has let public libraries down, has let the users down, has let seniors down, and most of these users are going to find that what they used to receive by way of a service is no longer there. So to all of the people who have signed this, this government, through Mike Harris, has let you down, his disciples have let you down and this minister most certainly has let you down.

The minister says, through another comment that she made today in the House, that the province will continue to support the library system through partnerships, policy and funding of the province-wide network of shared resources, cooperative services and telecommunications links that connect Ontario's public libraries. I must say that at least I am happy that this minister is saying that some funding will continue. I am worried about what that means by way of funding or by way of obligation of her ministry to sustain this network.

She talks about continuing to support the library system through partnerships, policy and funding. Funding is a third component of how she says she will sustain the



support. The other two are through partnerships and through policy. I'm not quite sure what "partnership" means, and I'm not quite sure what "policy" means by way of sustaining this network. I know the policy assistant or some other ministry assistant is there, and I hope that if she or the other assistant who was there has some advice to me, you might write it down so that I can be enlightened by you, if not the minister, at some later point.

But I tell you I am worried. I am worried that this government and their disciples here are not paying attention to this uncorking of countless bills that we are assaulted with and besieged and beleaguered by daily in this House. The uncorking of so many bills is confusing not only to the electorate but to these poor disciples who sit by every day, trying to understand the little bit that they can in this array or disarray of bills. I'm sure it's got them confused, no doubt. I know that the majority of the public is confused, but imagine these poor apprentices going through this political process for the very first time. It must be very tough.

**Interjection:** Look at their faces.

**Mr Marchese:** Yes, if you look at their faces, they look constantly in consternation at what this government does on a daily basis. Don't you see it? Don't you see that daily? I see it daily.

**Mr Bill Murdoch (Grey-Owen Sound):** Tell us about partnerships. You don't understand.

**Mr Marchese:** Partnerships? The member from somewhere there talks about —

**The Deputy Speaker:** The member for Grey-Owen Sound.

**Mr Marchese:** Where is he from? Ah, Grey-Owen Sound. Listen to me, Speaker. The member for Grey-Owen Sound talks about partnerships. I tell you this: They hand down, download, a number of essential services that should be provincially funded to the municipalities and they say that's partnership. They hold a gun to their head and then they say, "This is what we mean by partnership."

Is that your understanding of partnerships, as you hold a gun to the municipality's head? Member for Grey-Owen Sound, please pay attention to what's happening here. They've got a gun on your municipalities and you call it partnerships? Come on.

**Mr Len Wood (Cochrane North):** Mike Harris is closing his hospital.

**Mr Marchese:** Mike Harris is closing his hospital? What else is Mike Harris doing to these fine disciples of his? He's shutting the whole province down. Mr Harris says this government is too bloated; he wants to shut it all down. He doesn't see a role for government except to facilitate for his developer friends. That's what it's about: facilitating a greater role for the uninvolvement of government so that the corporations, the banks and their fine rich friends can have access to anything they want, unrestrained by any regulation or laws. This government is cutting the red tape for them. That's what this is all about. This and every other bill is about using these disciples as instruments of their agenda, of the agenda of the wealthy financiers of this country.

I know, Mr Speaker, you probably are a bit puzzled by that remark too, but I tell you when you look at the

global picture in terms of what globalization is all about, they want the harmonization of services to be decreased. They want all that cost to get out of the way. Why? Because they want us to be able to compete with those poor people of Burma, poor people of Asia, poor people of South America, poor people of Africa. They want us to compete with them, thus requiring everything that we do publicly, everything that protects the public interest to be diminished to its lowest common denominator. That's what this is all about.

I know this is very complicated for most people to see. How can you expect ordinary people trying to struggle through this society to survive, to feed their families, to have the time to reflect on these global connections, on what is happening around us as the financial institutions are finally taking over, breaking down all the barriers across the land, across this world, so they can have free access to their markets in the way they want. Tories and Reform parties are there to do their bidding, by and large, although I must admit the Liberals are doing that equally well at the federal level and other levels as well.

To get back to this whole issue of libraries, I have looked at the presentation done by Lynne Jordan, chief librarian, who is on the Kingston Public Library Board as a chairperson but also on the Frontenac County Public Library Board. She serves on those two boards. She makes some insightful comments which I think are particularly relevant for all of us and all of the constituencies that these fine Tory disciples hold in a lot of the areas around Ontario. They should listen carefully because it will affect them in three areas that she speaks to: preserving universal access, preserving funding and preserving governance.

She's very worried about the whole issue of free access to library resources. What used to be free access to library resources is going to become problematic in the future because the government, in cutting back 40% of public support for libraries, in dealing with those cut-backs, is going to be forced to charge user fees.

**1740**

I know this government hates those words "user fees," but that's what they are involved in. Bill 26 confirmed the provincial government's support for user fees at the time. She knows that and she knows that in order to generate significant revenues to deal with the shortfall this government has caused and to deal with the shortfall that municipalities have had to deal with because municipalities generally have received 40% less in funding in the last two years, they are forced to institute user fees to be able to make up for the shortfall.

She's very, very worried about what that will do. She argues, and I agree, that what will be achieved by this legislation is two tiers of library services, and she's absolutely right about that. She says, "a basic level of library services for some for which there is no fee and an enhanced level of services for which users will pay." That's what this is all about, a two-tier system: basic service for reading materials and pay-as-you-go for enhanced services, particularly as it relates to information that is required electronically and other areas of service as well.



She's right. Is this what this government is forcing on our population? Is this what it wants? I have to say this is indeed what it wants because if it didn't want that, then it would continue to provide the support to libraries and not let them down. Library professionals who are experienced in filling information needs have never believed a format should determine what is basically library service and what is enhanced.

Experience has shown that use decreases once fees are implemented, but it's quite obvious, once you start charging a fee for whatever it is that one is required to pay for, that particular use for that material, whatever it is, goes down. That's a fact.

She says at Kingston Public Library a video insurance fee was implemented to recover the cost of damage to a particular collection, and she says a 37% drop in use resulted from the imposition of this fee. Quite clearly, we know what's happening. At Frontenac County Public Library, of which she's a board member as well, a drop of 50% in use of the videos resulted after the imposition of an insurance fee.

At best, only modest revenues can be generated using user fees. Annual membership fees in Edmonton and in Calgary public libraries generated only 3% of total revenues. This new legislation, she argues and I agree, ensures that availability of library service will be reduced for those who cannot pay. Those who can pay may preserve Ontario's libraries for their own use.

It's quite clear to me — it should be clear to the assistant of the minister who still sits here listening to my remarks — that libraries are going to be forced to charge a fee for use of many, many materials, what she calls enhanced materials, and only those who can afford to pay will have access to it. But she says, "As studies show, the more you are charged for something the less they use it and you only recover a bare minimal percentage because of user fees." So what you have guaranteed is less use of those materials that are of benefit to the majority of people who use libraries.

It's not Conrad Black who goes to the library. Conrad Black will buy what he needs. Conrad Black is not going to go to a library to have access to this information. He's going to buy it at a very heavy price. He doesn't need these little services, but seniors in Welland-Thorold will need them. Seniors in Nipigon will need them. Citizens in Sarnia will need them. Children all over the map that these people represent, in Brant-Haldimand, in Scarborough East, in Norfolk, all these people everywhere are going to need these services and they won't be able to afford them.

This government has the gall, this minister has the gall to say that provincial involvement is an unnecessary intrusion. She has the fortitude somehow to stand up here with an easy face saying this is an unnecessary intrusion.

The Local Control of Public Libraries Act provides no provincial funding for public libraries. That's what this is all about. Public libraries have received a 40% reduction, which I have alluded to already. "The elimination of provincial per-household grants will shut down a large number of small libraries" — in some of those little places that some of you come from — "and make the operation of county library systems which face the

challenges of large geographic areas, long-distance telephone call, costly delivery services, multiple service points and lower taxation base more difficult."

*Interjection.*

**Mr Murdoch:** Are you making fun of our little places?

**Mr Marchese:** She's right. Member for Grey-Owen Sound, listen to what I'm saying. Pay attention. I'll repeat this for you because it's important. I'm not saying this.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The member for Grey-Owen Sound; the member for Lambton.

**Mr Marchese:** This is what the chairperson, Lynne Jordan, chief librarian, has said. I believe it to be true: "The elimination of provincial per-household grants will shut down" — Grey-Owen Sound. The member for Grey-Owen Sound is not paying attention.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Member for Fort York, address the Chair.

**Mr Marchese:** Through you, Speaker, to the member for Grey-Owen Sound.

**The Deputy Speaker:** No, there are no questions back and forth. You address the Chair.

**Mr Marchese:** "The elimination of the provincial per-household grants will shut down a large number of small libraries" — where many of you come from — "and make the operation of county library systems which face the challenges of large geographic areas, long-distance telephone calls, costly delivery services, multiple service points and lower taxation base more difficult."

**Mr Murdoch:** Where did you get that from?

**Mr Marchese:** I read it to you. You weren't listening. That's why I repeated it to you. Mr Speaker, I was repeating this for his benefit so that he would know.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Take your seat. There's a period of questions and comments afterwards. The member for Grey-Owen Sound, if you have any remarks, bring them at that time. It's quite easy. Member for Fort York, please address the Chair; don't address the member for Grey-Owen Sound. You talk to me. Go ahead, please.

**Mr Marchese:** Thank you for your guidance and assistance, as usual.

She's worried about what will happen to a lot of these county libraries. Some will disappear. Where there are great distances, some of those libraries will become difficult. Where there's a low tax base, it will become difficult. The minister says, "Don't worry." She said to you and to me, "Don't worry, we're taking education out of the property tax." She says quite blissfully that now they're going to have a lot of funding as a result. She says that with a straight face and the disciples all agree like penguins. How does it provide more money —

*Interjection.*

**Mr Marchese:** Like penguins.

**Mr Len Wood:** Seals.

**Mr Michael Brown:** Seals, yes.

**Mr Marchese:** Seals? Close. How, by taking out that money, are we going to give more money to municipalities when we are unloading, offloading nonchalantly and without mercy to the municipalities housing, unloading uncharitably long-term care, unloading uncharitably welfare, unloading transportation, unloading some of the public health matters? They're unloading all that and



people are adding up the figures and they're discovering that the charity of this government isn't much charity at all, that it's going to cost them a whole lot more.

Then this minister says, "But don't worry, folks, we're going to take this tax out, we can take a couple of billion out of education, and we're going to download to you unsuspecting fools a whole lot of problems that you're not aware of. You're going to be paying a whole lot of money, much more in your property taxes."

The poor libraries, struggling to get attention from the municipalities once you have done so, will not be able to sustain anywhere near the level of funding that they provided, and all of this provincial funding that we used to provide, the \$40 million, will disappear. That's what will happen.

1750

Removal of that funding from the province means the same system cannot be preserved. The suggestion that there will be more funds from municipal services with the realignment of education to the provincial tax base is not realistic. Everybody knows that. I make the point, but so does Lynne Jordan, chief librarian of the two library systems I mentioned. They all know this. It is not news to them, but it is news to the disciples here, who don't have a clue about what is taking place. When we get to these issues of access, when we get to the issues of providing full responsibility to municipalities, who knows what's going to happen?

Giving full governance to the municipalities means that we no longer have the kind of library system where we're guaranteed a majority of public citizens, ordinary citizens, to be there to preserve the public interest. When we take that away, which is what we had under the old act, we no longer will have, I suspect and fear, a citizenry that will be controlling those library boards, but we will have who knows what. We will have municipalities which will take complete control of those library systems, as many have wanted to do in the past. Many municipalities have wanted to take them over, and our suspicion is, and I believe Lynne Jordan probably agrees, that we could see the elimination of many chief librarians. Many municipalities may decide that we don't need chief librarians, that we can take it over by a bureaucracy of our municipal government and run it through other librarians, let them run whatever remains of our libraries in those towns and/or counties.

That would be the extent of what we are handing them down as we pass on governance, as we see it now, where they are non-political by and large, where we see the majority of the members being ordinary citizens who care, who volunteer because they care, and who might be taken over by municipal politicians completely.

In the Toronto board, where I was a member for a couple of years, we had one or two city councillors sit together with our board. It is true that they often did not come, that their attendance was oft-times very sporadic, but that was the extent of their involvement. The point was that we had citizens who controlled those library boards, we had municipal representation in order that they knew through the municipal councillors how money was being spent, and we achieved that kind of accountability through that representation.

I fear that what will happen now is a full control of those libraries by municipalities, where some chief librarians will no longer be there. Why? To save money, because the more money that is taken out of the system, the less money that this government provides, the more it is hell-bent on introducing the other 15% of income tax cut which flows out money to their banker friends, the more insanities they introduce of that nature and continue with, the more municipalities will find themselves with less funding and the more they will want to streamline — so the line goes, a line this government likes — their library operations.

So you will have user fees — inevitable — creating therefore a two-tier system. You will have citizen participation diminished. You will have many of those libraries controlled completely by municipalities, by municipal councillors. It no longer will be an operation, an entity, unto itself, but it will be taken over essentially. It will be taken over by the municipality. So much for that governance that has ensured for a long time a dispassionate and apolitical relationship where it ensured a great deal of citizen participation, where it ensured that the use of our library system had accessibility to all irrespective of income, irrespective of age, irrespective of colour.

What this government has done, in my view, is a very shameful thing of completely abrogating its responsibility to libraries, of completely denying a provincial role in setting important standards, of ensuring province-wide accessibility to those resources that we provide. What it tells me is that this government has no interest whatsoever in maintaining its role towards ensuring a universal system, towards ensuring more and greater public involvement. I'm sad to say that from everything I'm seeing here, this government is abdicating completely its provincial responsibility not just for libraries, but for many other things as well.

Speaker, I thank you. I'm looking forward to the apprentices and the disciples here responding to the kinds of comments that we've made here today.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Questions and comments?

**Mr Shea:** It's with some regret that I have to rise and respond in part to the last speaker, who pranced and preened for 45 minutes and said nothing. His colleague who went before him did in fact add substantially to the debate, and I found that of considerable assistance to hear his comments.

Very briefly, I suppose the member from Fort York has a reason to be modest about his municipal experience. To compare that against the minister's of 13 years in municipal government, I think she does in fact understand the difficulties and the challenges of administering municipal budgets, understands the sensitivities that have to be reflected in terms of relationships with boards, and I think that is reflected in this bill. There is in fact considerable scope for councils and for boards to interact.

I might point out that the Who Does What panel suggested that we eliminate the boards and the minister was not prepared to accept that. The minister was quite adamant by saying: "No, the boards must continue. Yes, we'll let the local councils make the decisions of what size and how they'll be constituted, but the boards must continue."



That brings me to an interesting point, because the member for Fort York smiled throughout his speech, particularly as he got towards the end. As we saw his teeth, we saw blood dripping from them as he ripped the gullets out of local councils. He doesn't trust local councils. He doesn't believe they will do the right thing. A very curious argument for this member to take and to put before this House, when we put before us the remembrance of other issues that he debates in other quarters, particularly in the area of Bill 103. I frankly think that what he had to say can reasonably be discounted.

I am more interested in some of the points raised by the member for Dovercourt, and when I make my comments next week, I will refer to them directly.

**Mr Michael Brown:** I thought the remarks from the member for Dovercourt and the member for Fort York were extremely interesting and extremely valuable. I was particularly interested in the comments surrounding the smaller libraries in this province, the ones in places like Manitouwaning and Little Current, in Mindemoya and my own library in the township of Billings. I think about Lil Boyd, the librarian there, and the good people on the library board who have fund-raisers, bake sales and teas and that sort of thing to maintain this relatively small library. While the amount of provincial funding may not appear to be significant to the minister, that amount of funding that came from the province was significant to these small libraries and probably, in many cases, will make the difference in their level of service to a considerable degree.

As we think about what's going on here, we are now coming to an electronic age. The minister spoke to that briefly. I wonder if the smaller libraries are going to be able to manage the equipment costs, the hardware you will need, the computers, the printers, to make sure that the children, especially the children, in these small communities have access to information they should have access to.

1800

It is a brave new world in many respects. The 21st century should allow people in rural areas the same kind of access you can have in our metropolitan centres. If our libraries cannot function in the smaller places allowing that kind of access to information at a reasonable cost, those in the rural areas are not going to be able to participate in this new information age.

**Mr Len Wood:** I enjoyed immensely the comments of the member for Fort York and the member for Dovercourt in the 90 minutes that they've explained the way they see the attack on libraries right across this province.

I know the small libraries in the communities of Cochrane, Kapuskasing and Hearst that were depending on provincial funding in order to make ends meet and give the service the communities needed are going to be in very difficult shape now as they extract money that was used for the libraries. The municipalities are going to have to find ways of increasing taxes because of the mega-week dump that we saw in order to try to find a 30% tax break to give to the wealthiest people of this province.

We know that education is under attack; hospitals are being closed. Even in some of the Conservative members'

ridings hospitals are being closed. Funding for schools is being cut by \$400 million last year, \$1 billion this year, and we don't know how much more in the future there.

But I enjoyed immensely the whole area that was covered by the member for Fort York and the member for Dovercourt in their opening remarks on this particular bill, because I believe it's very important that the people in this province understand exactly what Mike Harris and his cabinet and the Conservative caucus are doing to this province because of the mega-week dump. It doesn't matter if it's Bill 103, Bill 104 and all the others in the series; in this particular case Bill 109, the libraries.

I have some comments from Cochrane. The people of Cochrane wrote letters, signed petitions, demonstrated by blocking a number of highways, but did the government care? No. They wouldn't even meet with the town officials to provide some answers as to why this ridiculous initiative is being taken by the government of Ontario concerning the town of Cochrane.

**Mr Bert Johnson (Perth):** I want to comment and ask a question, because I listened with attention to the members for Dovercourt and for Fort York.

The member for Fort York used the term that "we used to have free access to libraries," and I guess I would ask him to explain that because I didn't think there was any such thing as free. I thought the province paid for it or the federal government or the municipal government, or in fact the people who use it.

The other thing was that the member for Dovercourt was explaining those financial difficulties the libraries would have. I'd say, yes, some of them have undergone those and indeed the province of Ontario has undergone those same sorts of financial difficulties. Both the member for Dovercourt and the member for Fort York should be very familiar with why Ontario has gotten into those financial difficulties. They of course were members of the government that taxed, borrowed and spent over the last five years, spent our grandchildren's inheritances and put us into those sorts of things.

I would also like to comment a little bit on downloading because when I was a member of the AMO committee on October 11, I believe it was 1992, the then NDP government had a definition before that panel on downloading. The next week when I wanted to get a copy of it, lo and behold, it was withdrawn because somebody said they didn't think they could support that definition of downloading. Indeed, the libraries in those municipalities that will be called upon to support them will have the tax dollars that used to go to education for that.

I'd like to thank you, Mr Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The member for Fort York has the floor for two minutes.

**Mr Marchese:** I want to thank the members for Algoma-Manitoulin and Cochrane North for listening. I want to comment on the member for High Park's comments as completely irrelevant. His elucidations were irrelevancies. He talks about the minister having an understanding of the challenges and having a sensitivity to the challenges of library users in municipalities. Neither he, the member for High Park, nor this minister has any clue about the damage they're going to do to our



libraries and our library users. He doesn't have a clue what he's talking about, and if he was listening, he would know that everything that I spoke about, by and large, was very much on topic.

This member for High Park, who is a former municipal councillor, doesn't have an understanding of the effect this will have. The person I was quoting often is a chief librarian and she understands, where this member for High Park does not because he's in complete ignorance of what this will do. This will create a two-tier system, to this member for High Park, one a basic system that everybody has access to and can afford and the other where people will have to pay for educational videos, audio books and other electronic material they need. A

two-tier system — speak to that when you're speaking. I'm looking forward to your remarks.

This chief librarian also says that, "Some small libraries will close and other county library systems that face the challenges of large geographic areas and long-distance telephone costs and low taxation base are going to find themselves in complete difficulty." I didn't say that; it's people in the field who are saying that. I don't mistrust municipal politicians, but when they get a 40% cut, they're going to have to cut back in library service.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Being 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 10 o'clock tomorrow morning.

*The House adjourned at 1807.*



**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO**  
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Oramilton South / -Sud	Clement, Tony (PC)	Kitchener	Wettlaufer, Wayne (PC)
Oramilton-Haldimand	Preston, Peter L. (PC)	Kitchener-Wilmot	Leadston, Gary L. (PC)
Oramilton-Randford	Johnson, Ron (PC)	Lake Nipigon / Lac-Nipigon	Pouliot, Gilles (ND)
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Orambridge	Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Lawrence	Cordiano, Joseph (L)
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Oratham-Kent	Carroll, Jack (PC)	London Centre / -Centre	Boyd, Marion (ND)
Oramilton North / -Nord	Wood, Len (ND)	London North / -Nord	<b>Cunningham, Hon / L'hon Dianne</b> (PC) Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, minister responsible for women's issues / ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales, ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
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Oramilton Mills	<b>Johnson, Hon / L'hon David</b> (PC) Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, government House leader / président du Conseil de gestion, leader parlementaire du gouvernement	Markham	Smith, Bruce (PC)
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Oramiltonsex South / -Sud	Crozier, Bruce (L)	Nickel Belt	<b>Harris, Hon / L'hon Michael D.</b> (PC) Premier and President of the Executive Council / premier ministre et président du Conseil exécutif
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Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.



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